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THE
CASE OF MR. LUCRAFT;
AND OTHER TALES.

BY THE AUTHORS OF
“READY MONEY MORTIBOY,” “THIS SON OF VULCAN,”
“THE GOLDEN BUTTERFLY,” ETC., ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. II.

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PART II.
FROM FAIRYLAND.

VOL. II.

B

TITANIA'S FAREWELL.



CHAPTER I.

“Yes, it is beautiful—but is it true?

My friends, we know not, and it matters not :

That some find consolation in the thought

Shows that from some truth-bearing germ it grew.”

It would, of course, be an absurd thing for me to expect to be believed when I recount the things that I saw and heard on the last Midsummer Night that the world has seen. It is an unbelieving age. We have become unbelieving through our morbid taste for fiction. We not only read so much, but we write so much, that the border-land between

truth and imagination is all confused, the frontier-posts removed, the hedges of partition broken down; so that we no longer know what to believe. And I, who come forward with my plain and unvarnished tale, trusting in nothing but its simplicity, no more expect or hope to meet with credence than if I were Mr. Anthony Trollope himself. This, if I were writing an article in the *Saturday*, would be a fruitful theme to enlarge upon. I could point out the injury done to simple unimagined historians and narrators of dry fact, like myself. I could also descant upon the evils of a system which has made Fable Land so much like Really-and-Truly Land that we get nothing by going there. Why, bless my heart! forty years ago we could get seers and dervishes in every keepsake; spectres, of course; ghouls, probably; insatiable persecutors of virtue and innocence, certainly. Uncles came home from India and gave unexpected fortunes to nephews at the very

nick of time ; wills were found in cupboards ; titles conferring the very loftiest rank descended accidentally on the most worthy. All manner of airy creations, gorgeous unrealities, wondrous and splendid fancies, glittering extravagances of imagination, abounded in the meadows of Fable Land, and made the whole country a Field of the Cloth of Gold. Now, all is changed. Its cities are as our cities—as ugly, and very nearly as dull. Its people are as ours. They talk exactly the same, and really quite as badly ; they dress the same, with a similar absence of good taste. And, in fact, one might just as well read a newspaper, advertisements and all, as one of the novels of real life from end to end. I know that by this preamble I may be laying myself open to a charge of attempting to gain credence for what follows. I am not, however, so anxious on this score, because my narrative is too plain and simple to invite criticism on the

ground of truth. And, after all, what does it matter whether one is believed or not in these bad days?

The odd thing is, that I should have remembered it all so well. The events recorded took rather more than three hours in all, with the songs and the dances. I allowed a few days to elapse, during which I was tormented with a feverish anxiety to write, before I began at all. When I at last commenced my task, I found the whole story from beginning to end drop into a regular, it is not for me to say an artistic, form, just as you see it here. I seemed to be writing at dictation. That, you will remark, is itself a proof of my credibility; other proofs will be found on the last page. In as few words as possible, let me get rid of myself and go on with my story.

I was walking in the New Forest. Certain symptoms, with which I will not trouble the

general reader, made me think that a week's quiet holiday would do me good. I am one of those who, when the mind is quite decided that a certain course of action is likely to do one good, always go and follow up that line. By this means I get a great deal more enjoyment out of the year than those laborious fellows who are content with their rush of a month in September. Last year, for instance, I made a good six months clear this way. I went, then, to the New Forest, the scenery of which you may find described in the guide books. I stayed in an old inn, just a single step above a village public, in a little market town. They told me that they were quiet on every day of the week except market-day. This was on the Friday. Accordingly, on the Friday, armed with a bagful of provisions and a flask, I started on a long and solitary ramble in the forest.

It is eight o'clock. The sun is low, and

will set in a quarter of an hour. I come to the conclusion that I have actually and decidedly lost my road. I walk on in a purposeless way. Then I turn back, with the thought that, after all, the town must be in the other direction. Then backwards and forwards till I find myself once more by the old oak—so old, that it may even have witnessed the death of the Red King. Twilight is on me, and it is ten o'clock. I sit down, and opening my basket, finish the beef and bread that is left from dinner, take one more pull at the flask, and, lighting my pipe, lie down, determined to make the best of a bad business and sleep under the oak.

I have been asleep. The night is as clear and bright as the day : so clear that the cock in some far-distant farmhouse—for his note is faint—keeps waking up, nervously thinking that it is day, and that he has overslept himself, till he is reassured by the sight of the

moon. It is so clear, that if you had been sitting where I was, on one of the roots of the gnarled oak tree, you would have seen, as I did, the shape of every leaf, a dark black place cut out of a deep blue sky. It is so clear and bright, that every flower in the grass and on the bushes—cowslip and fox-glove, honeysuckle and wild rose—can be distinctly seen, with its colours softened in the bright moonlight, which lies like a transparent veil of silver lace, sparkling like the sea, and covering flowers and grass, trees and bushes, hill and valley.

There is no sound in the air. Only, now and then, a faint breeze rustling amid the leaves; and then one, weaker than the rest, comes crashing and tumbling through the others to the ground. Or, now and then, a twitter from a topmost bough, where some bird is dreaming uneasily; and when the breeze freshens, it brings with it a faint babble which, I believe, must be the brook

running by my lost market-town, ever so many miles away. But I am much too lazy to get up and look for it.

The forest is laden with sweet perfumes. Are all the flowers rejoicing over the longest day? I cannot see them; but it seems to me that, in the mingled fragrance that hangs in the lazy summer air, I can detect most sweet scents that I know. The rose, the honeysuckle, the white May-blossom, the cowslip: these one may expect in the woods; but where can mignonette be? and whence the heavy odour of wistaria, and can there be wild beds of wallflower in the forest? It must be the heavy perfumes that mount into my brain, and make me reluctant to move; and perhaps it is the intoxication of the senses which makes me dream—for I am quite sure I am dreaming—that I am being bound, hand and foot, by light and unseen hands. But I try to move, and I cannot. Then I know it is no dream. Nor can I

· speak, for my lips are sealed with dew, brushed on them with a fern-leaf. Light fingers close my eyes, so that I cannot open them. It is well, for the moon has been all this time growing stronger and stronger, till now she shines like the electric light, full upon the tree and the greensward about it. Curiously, too, all the country round seems suddenly and strangely dark. So I lie and listen; but no sound, except the beating of my heart.

Then a church tower—it must have been at least six miles away—began to strike the hour. First the four quarters, with a mournful cadence which shaped itself into a verse. It may be objected that you could not hear the clock bells at six miles. There is only one way to answer such an objection. Go there, take the same place and the same time, under exactly similar circumstances of weather, and you will hear for yourself. I am also convinced that it is only by going

at night, and far away, that you can get at the real song of the clock-tower. Thus it went :—

“One Quarter—Sleep and rest ;
Two Quarters—No care take ;
Three Quarters—Night is best ;
Four Quarters—God doth wake.”

The words are crabbed, and the rhymes simple. Remember, however, that they were only those of a village steeple, which could not be expected to know better. Presently began the big bell : one—two—three—four. I thought he would never get through all the twelve ; which he did, after a decent time, doing his work in a leisurely and somnolent fashion. After another interval, the chimes began ringing out an old and simple hymn tune. There were, as nearly as I could make out, eight bells, viz., three trebles, two seconds, one tenor, and two basses. The words the bells sang were, at this great distance, quite articulate and plain :—

“Midnight bells ring lightly o’er
Sleeping child and sleeping maid.
Dreams of happy seasons pour :
Only crime makes man afraid.

“Midnight bells, like thunder peal,
Fall on waking sinner’s ear :
Only stricken hearts that feel
Midnight power of speechless fear.

“Ring we how God’s love doth fold
All His little ones around ;
Ring we hope for young and old ;
Ring for sick bed and for sound.

“Sleep, then, sleep till day doth break ;
Fear is none, for God doth wake.”

The last words died away with the dropping breeze. Then stillness fell on everything—a stillness absolute and perfect, yet not as of death ; rather as of peaceful sleep, when one might seem to hear the soft pulsations of the earth, and he who is waking lies lapped in perfect rest, conscious that the air is laden with slumber, and careless dreams, and forgetfulness for all the world.

I lay and waited.

Presently I lifted my head, and looked around me.

The scene was changed. No light now, but a thick darkness overhead, and as if the moon had been taken down and cut into a thousand pieces, each of which—a tiny diamond of light—was hanging on a branch of the bushes, like so many lamps ranged in festoons round the smooth greensward, which lay before me, a tiny lawn of level turf. Nothing could be seen ; but I heard a faint murmur as of continuous laughter, half repressed, and a rustling among the leaves. Then a horn sounded, low and echoing, a clarion call ; and down a little lane, which led from somewhere in the outer darkness, I saw a procession slowly advancing in my own direction.

Now, here the wonderful part of the whole story begins. I rubbed my eyes to be quite

sure that I was not dreaming. I beg to state that I distinctly remember rubbing my eyes.

The procession drew nearer. Music, but invisible, came with it. It was surrounded by glancing lights. Strange colours played upon the chariot which headed the long cavalcade. Strange forms, graceful and unearthly, uncouth and unearthly, hovered over it and flew above it.

I had neither the wish to break silence, nor the fear of any harm for myself. Only curiosity and wonder possessed me; for I knew then that I—the only man in this century, perhaps—was face to face with the Fairies; that Masters Cobweb and Mustard-seed were those who had bound me and closed my eyes; that this was Midsummer Night; that in the chariot before me stood OBERON and TITANIA, King and Queen of the ancient and wonderful Realm of Faërie.

I thought of all the stories I had read. Changelings—but I am much too old to be a changeling. Pinchings and prickings—that might happen for unbelief. Moon madness—well, there are some folks for whom any change in the condition of their brains would be a change for the better. Odd, too, how carnal things will creep in; for I thought next that I should certainly catch rheumatism from lying on the grass. And in the midst of these anxieties a voice whispered in my ear—

“Listen, be silent, and no harm will be done to you.”

I turned round. Beside me stood one whose face and form changed every moment; but by the light he bore, and by his antic gestures, I knew him at once for JACK O’ LANTERN.

CHAPTER II.

“When the lamp is shattered,
The light in the dust lies dead.”

SHELLEY.

ON a throne of silver, set with rubies and gems, and laid with velvet cushions the colour of the turf—the precious stones set like flowers, a canopy of green branches over its head—were seated King Oberon and Queen Titania. Then the music, which had ceased for a while, broke out again in a strange, mysterious melody, like a triumphal march. To prevent further questions, I may say at once that, though I remember everything else, I have entirely, thanks to an

uncultivated ear, forgotten the music. I only know that it was now quick, now slow : rising sometimes to a wail of lament, and changing then to low notes of laughter and joy ; now a dance, and then a march—music that was never written in notes, and played on instruments unknown to man. It came from the outer ring, beyond the lamps, where all was dark.

I looked at the royal pair. Oberon stood erect : tall, pale, kingly. Over his clustered curls was placed his crown of diamonds. A purple mantle fell from his shoulders. He wore no sword, but carried in his hand a simple wand. His face was overcast and set with care. Titania was sitting beside him. Her long, fair hair fell in a wealth of waves over her shoulders and beneath her diadem. Her eyes were turned upon her lord and king. Her face bore the reflection of his sorrow. Her hands were clasped.

Seated at her feet, smaller than any of

the rest, was one with a child's face full of wisdom, a smile full of pity, a look as wayward as the breeze, as changing as the ocean. It was as if there were no memory of things past ; as if she lived only in the present ; as if she sorrowed with those who sorrow, and laughed with those who laugh. I knew her, by her wand and tiny crown, for Queen Mab.

In the air, now among the dancers on the sward, now before the throne—lightest, brightest, sweetest of spirits—was Ariel, the King's messenger.

On the ground beside the throne lay he who had just whispered me, Jack o' Lantern. They called him Puck. A mocking light was in his eye, laughter flickered on his lips. He shifted from one form to another ; but one knew him always by his eye, unlike any of the rest.

The music played on ; and on the turf the fairies danced in elfin glee, unmindful of the sorrow of their King. But when he spoke

the music stopped, and they ceased their gambols. There must have been thousands of them, clad in weird and fanciful robes of various hue, with faces human—only of unearthly expression—and faces animal.

“Titania,” said the King, “this is our last night of all. Our pleasant sports are finished : our gambols on the midnight sands, our frolics in the old halls, our dances on the greensward—all are finished ! Way-wanderer will no more quake to see us glancing among the bushes ; maidens will no more dream of us in terror and delight. We go ! Simplicity and happy ignorance have left the land. We live by faith of man. Tell me, my children, if any faith remains. None ? ”—there was a dead silence—“ None ! Titania, it is time to be gone.”

She fell, weeping, upon his shoulder. A low murmuring of sobs rose from the stilled ring of elves ; and Puck, leading the rest, cried—

"We live by faith of men. They believe in us no more; therefore, we must go."

"Is this, then, the last night?" cried the Queen.

"It is, indeed, the last night," replied Oberon.

From every leaf and bush echoed a groan—

"The last night!—the last night!"

"But three short hours," the King went on—"but three short hours, and the kingdom of Faërie will be over in Merry England—merry, alas! no more. We have known and loved it so well: we have blessed so many mansions, dropped a charm over so many cottages, spread love and tenderness over so many homes, danced in so many woods, lived in so many haunts; and now we must go!"

"Alas! alas!" cried the goblin troop, "we must go—we must go!"

"There is no land like the land of the

English—no forests like theirs, no lawns like their lawns. We love not the rank grass and the heavy-flowering trees of the tropics ; the crested palm is not like the leafy elm ; the scent of spices is not to us like the perfume of the wild thyme and the primrose. We love not the black man so well as the Saxon. Their children have been our playthings, their maidens our care ; their singers have been taught by us ; their children's games are ours ; their joys are our joys. And they forget us—they forget us ! ”

“ Alas ! ” cried the sobbing Queen, “ the ungrateful folk forget us. Let us go ! ”

And from all the weeping throng went up a cry—

“ The folk forget us ! Let us go ! ”

“ There was a time,” Oberon continued, “ when the village maiden found the butter churned by us, and the cow milked ready to her hand.”

“ I used to drink the milk ! ” sighed Puck.

“Then the ring on the grass showed our footprints ; then they told stories of us around the fire, and sang songs of us at night. All loved us, and delighted to tell of us, even the best and noblest. Now, all is changed. The songs are no more of Robin Goodfellow and the Brownies : they tell of the poor man’s suffering, the rich man’s luxury. The folk are more wealthy than they were, but they are not so contented. The new songs which the poets sing are of the earth, earthy. It is time that we go.”

“It is time that we go !” they echoed.

“Come, my children,” said the King ; “after all, there are other lands where we can find a home. There are sunlit islands of the Indian Ocean, fringed with a silver surf, where the palm trees wave a welcome to us. I have seen them. There, the tree-fern spreads its leaves above us in a circle of glory. There, the moon is brighter than it is here, and the air warmer. A thousand

insects fly abroad, and a thousand gloriously coloured creatures creep through the forest. We may deck ourselves with the skin of the cobra and the scarlet feathers of the flamingo. My Titania shall wear the crest of the green parrot ; she shall take her fan from the breast of the little Cardinal, and her feathers from the Bird of Paradise. Puck may mock the monkey in the tree, and Ariel shall float in an air far balmier and warmer than this. It is true, the turf is not so fine, and the grass is tall and rank ; but the flowering creepers hang thicker than the whitethorn, binding tree to tree and forest to forest. Foxglove and violets there are none ; but there are the white blossoms of the moon plant, and the scarlet flowers of the flamboyant. No winter there starves the lives out of God's creatures ; no frost bites the poor man ; no ice, and hail, and snow drive us to seek shelter in our own Fairyland ; no driving sleet—— ”

"Yes," interrupted Mab; "and no cottage hearths, no gatherings in the winter evenings, no song by the red coals, no joyous welcome out of the cold and wet. Would that we might stay!"

"We lose our time," said the King, waving his hand impatiently, "in idle regrets. Dance, my children, as of old. Titania, think of old days. Remember how they danced for Bottom the weaver."

Titania smiled.

"It is a long while ago—long ago. They are all dead. Hippolyta henpecked Theseus, and Demetrius died of Lesbian wine. All dead and forgotten!"

"Nay, that night will ever live. What became of Hermia?"

"She lived tolerably happy with Lysander, till he was killed at the battle of Marathon. When Demetrius took to evil courses and pawned the furniture for drink, she often relieved Helena. Bottom lived on her bounty,

too, when Hippolyta struck him off the pension list, and he lost his sixpence a day."

"True," said Oberon ; "but it is long ago. Play, music ; sing, singers."

Bright and beautiful, the elves sprang to their feet ; and as they danced, in a wild, fantastic manner, they sang their chorus together, words keeping time with feet—

"Strike, strike the strain the fairies love ;
Awake the flowers that sleep above ;
Till bluebell bends her face to see,
And roses greet our revelry ;
Till violet turns her sleepy eye
To catch us as we hurry by ;
Till field-mice peep from every hole,
And, blinking, peers the purblind mole.
Awake the flowers that sleep above ;
Strike, strike the strain the fairies love !"

Then the King raised his hand ; and, in a moment, all was still.

It was Titania who broke the silence.

"Is there, my liege, no place whither we can go ? Must we make the weary journey

over the scorching sand and the stormy sea ?
Is all Europe grown so clever as to doubt
us ? ”

The King shook his head.

“ They have not passed an Education Bill
everywhere,” murmured the Queen. “ Oh,
surely, there are not School Boards in all
Europe ! ”

“ Let us remember,” said Oberon, “ that
we cannot go to the shores of the Mediter-
ranean. The woods and streams of Italy
and Greece are haunted by beings far dif-
ferent from ourselves—Bacchus and his noisy
crew. You would not like to associate with
him. Satyrs there are—monsters of most
uncomely appearance, and their manners are
detestable. Dryads there are in the woods,
and Naiads by the fountains ; but you would
not like them. They have nothing in com-
mon with us. They drowned the fair young
Hylas. When did we drown fair youth ?
They enchanted Narcissus. Then there are

the Sirens. They lure brave warriors to destruction. Whom did we ever destroy? They bring to shame and misery. Nay, Titania, thither we cannot go. We are Teutonic elves. We came from the black mountains and thick forests of Germany to the upland lawns and merry valleys of England."

"Can we not go back there?"

"It must not be," said the King. "Germany is no more. It is all Prussia. We love not iron heels and martial despotism. We love the lands of liberty. Yet it is the old country. It is the land of our birth. Long have I pondered whether, after all, we might not return."

"There have been many," the Queen pleaded, "who have loved us as well as our own Shakspeare and Hood. There it was we passed our marriage moon. Some honour should surely await us in the land of Wieland and Tieck."

"I thought of all this, fair one; and, un-

known to you, I have been there lately. It is no land for us. True it is that the wild restlessness which runs riot here is there but little known; yet the phantasy by which we live neglected, is long since forgotten—for the greatest minds have never known us at all. Their woods are mostly peopled with ghosts and goblins; witches meet on their mountain-tops; giant spectres stalk about the hills. Nothing lovely, nothing pleasant; and, to fill up all, clumsy plaster casts of the Fauns of Latin hills.”

He stopped and laughed.

“I must tell you what I saw. Say then if we may ever go back to the German land. There is a little University town, from which learned men have come in plenty. One of them, still living, I found sitting in his study, translating the ‘Midsummer Night’s Dream.’”

“It was a laudable and a noble thing to do,” said the Queen; while all the fairies applauded.

“ It was. And he was writing a commentary all the while upon it. He sat at his task from five in the morning, when he rose, till eleven at night, when he went to bed. He never had a tub. His windows were always closed, and his fire lit. He smoked a vast pipe all day, while his servant brought him from time to time a cup of coffee. I sat upon his shoulder, unknown and unseen, and sought to kindle in his sluggish brain some sparks of inspiration, blowing the smoke of his pipe into a thousand suggestive and fantastic shapes. But he wrote on, and never looked up. I looked into his brain : it was crammed with knowledge, but muddled with conceit, vanity, and ignorance of men and the world. Then I began to get angry. Looking over his shoulder, I read what he was writing. He said—

“ ‘ It cannot be too distinctly borne in mind that the inwardness of this poet’s genius,

and the noblest portions of his considerable creative faculties, are mainly German, in their tendencies towards the embodiment of the Ideal ; while very many of his productions, with more or less distinctness, not only in their generalizations of the unique, but equally—if not, perhaps, rather—sometimes in a still greater measure, in the analogization of that consecutiveness which is evolved from the development of the interpenetrative conjunction of his ratiocinative idiosyncrasies, which in their turn depend——’”

Here the King stopped, and looked around him. A profound slumber had fallen upon everybody present. Titania's head drooped before her hand ; Mab lay curled round, her eyes closed in sleep ; Puck was in a heap upon the ground ; and Ariel lay motionless on a bough. Every fairy was stretched in deep, measureless unconsciousness.

The King smiled. He first awakened

Titania, and then Puck. The Queen implored pardon.

“My Titania,” said the King, “I did exactly the same thing myself when I first read the passage. Wake the troop, good Puck.”

They were roused from their slumbers with some difficulty.

“Now,” continued the King, “try not to sleep again. I will leave out a large portion.”

He went on :—

“‘The ingrained coarseness of the English mind has, from time to time, sprung backwards into most lamentable forms of grossest superstition.’ (Mab, my child, you are nodding.) ‘Thus, the same nation which habitually shuts up its wives in madhouses, when it cannot sell them in Smithfield for a glass of porter-beer-ale and a steak, also believes’—(Listen, now, children! Puck, wake up the sleepers!)—‘also believes that the

brown circular patches, edged with bright green, seen in woods and fields, are caused by the fairies, and not, as has been shown by the illustrious Doctor Glaubenstodt, in his classical, ever-to-be-gratefully remembered and admired "Microscopical Investigations," 'to be the growth of a fungus, named the——'"

Here the voice of the King was interrupted by such an indignant clamour of wrath, that he was fain to pause awhile.

"Enough!" he said—"enough! We cannot live in a land whose poets write such notes as these. The great and glorious German country shall know us no more till their early faith returns to them."

"And that will be—when, O King?" was the cry.

"I know not. They must learn to love liberty more than military glory. They must learn mercy for the conquered, pity for the helpless. They must first be chivalrous,

before they can be simple. For in these things men work backwards. I know not. We fairies have not the gift of prophecy. We can remember the past, we can feel the present. We cannot reason—we cannot foretell. Enough of gloom! Let not our last night be passed in idle laments. Play, music—dance, elves—sing, Ariel!”

Again the wondrous strain of weird and magic music, again the dances in the ring. All clouds vanished from their noble features; and to the sound of the silver clarion, the ripple of the silver laughter, the tinkle of the thousand feet, Ariel's voice rose and fell, as he sang the Summer Song:—

“See, the sun doth early rise;
See, the woods throw deeper shade;
Lifts the world her thousand eyes,
Sing the birds in copse and glade.
Wakes again the throstle's note;
Cracks again the blackbird's throat;
Murmurous hummings lightly float
On the south wind air.
In the season none, I wot,
Half so blithe and fair.

“ Now the lilies, lying o’er
 Lazy waters, spread their leaves ;
Now the martins, back once more,
 Cling beneath the farmstead eaves ;
Now the roses flaunt their red ;
Now the sunflower turns his head :
Springing from their grassy bed,
Now the cowslips perfume shed.
Spring is dying, winter dead,
 All the world seems glad ;
Joy, of light and sunshine bred,
 Brightens faces sad.

“ Now the children leap and run,
 Over lawn and under bough :
Laugh, for summer is begun—
 Season none so glad as now.
Only Age, weighed down with cares,
Looks abroad, and sighs his fears,
Draws his long cap o’er his ears ;
Rheum and cough e’en south wind bears.
 Not so, years gone by :
Fain would weep, but finds no tears,
 Old age is so dry.

“ Age, be sad, ’tis fit thou should ;
 Sun is sunk, day spent for thee.
Children, dance through mead and wood,
 Know no change of life and glee.

Manhood, rouse, thine is the day—
Dreaming youth hath passed away.
Turn the waving grass to hay ;
Look the crop do not decay.
August too soon follows May—
Autumn gathers all.
Then comes Winter, grim and gray ;
Then the shadows fall.”

CHAPTER III.

“ ‘ Dear lord, it hath a fiendish look,’
The pilot made reply.”

COLERIDGE.

“ COME, we will hold our court,” said the King. “ Fly, my Ariel, east and west, north and south, proclaim that we are departing. Summon those friends before us who would bid us farewell.”

A long, low wail, at which the blood ran cold, rang through the trees. The elves shrieked with affright, and fled for shelter to the bushes ; the lights burned pale. Then a shape, as of a sheeted woman, wan, pale, thin, with long black tresses and wild eyes,

slowly moved into the ring. A cold, shrieking wind came with it.

"Who are you?" asked the King. "In the name of human credulity, who are you, and who invited you?"

The lips parted.

"I am the Banshee," it said, with a grating, strident voice. "I am going with you; for men believe in me no more."

"You go?" cried Titania. "You—the creation of a dreary superstition, the forerunner of sorrow, the foreteller of death, the nurse of pride! You!—and with us, the joy-bringers? Oberon, chastise this fond and foolish spirit."

Oberon laughed.

"Let us not trouble this our last night's meeting. Sufficient to bid this thing depart, and that right instantly."

"Oh " it cried, "let me go with you. My own place knows me no more. Night after night have I shrieked on plain and

hill, and men say it is the wind. Let me go too !”

“Can you dance ?” asked Puck.

It shook its head.

“Can you sing ?”

“No. I can only shriek. You may make men merry. I belong to death and separation. I can shriek for your departure. Listen !”

It shrieked—a long cry as of some woman to whom the news has too suddenly been brought of her son’s violent death—a cry of unutterable despair and misery, the cry of a breaking heart. The woods, awakened by the awful sound, sent forth a thousand wails in reply from the awakened birds. The owls flew across, with mournful hooting ; the bats thronged together to see the cause of all this tumult ; fathers of the young broods left their nests and flew to the spot, but hastened back in horror ; and the elves fell to the earth in terror, crying out in agony—

“ Let it go—let it go ; but not with us.”

“ Go,” said Oberon, who alone preserved his equanimity—“ go ; but not with us.”

Stealthily as it came, it crept away ; and presently the fairies recovered from their alarm, and looked up again.

When it was gone, the music began to play again, and the elves to come forth from their hiding-places. Then was heard a sort of humming—a sound as of underground horns and drums—and every one stood hushed and expectant. Next, from the roots of the oak, close by the throne, the sounds drew nearer and nearer. And then the players themselves appeared—a band of little black men, in colour like the black metal instruments on which they played, which were of iron—iron drums, iron trumpets, iron flutes. After them followed a little army, like themselves—short, square, with big heads—carrying spades and picks. Last of all, one taller than the rest, who wore an iron crown set

with black gems, clothed in a deep purple robe, carrying in his hand a sceptre of the reddest gold. At sight of them the fairies leaped for joy, and rushing from their hiding-places, danced round their cousins, the little Earthmen. The Queen smiled a welcome ; and Oberon, stepping with majestic air from the throne, embraced his royal brother.

“ Welcome,” he said, “ from the mines. It is long since we have seen the King of the Gnomes.”

“ Welcome,” returned the dusky King, whose name I did not hear—“ welcome, King Oberon. It is not our fault that we meet so seldom. Only, hearing that this night you hold revelry for the last time, we have come to bid you farewell ; or to go with you, if so it may be.”

“ Go with us ! But why not stay ? ”

“ Well, you see, it seems no good. From end to end of England, there is not a soul who believes in us. It is hard to be always

at work down below, and to meet with no appreciation of one's labours. We don't want riches. We work at the mines for men; we put the ore in readiness for the miners. But we work in vain. No thanks, no acknowledgment; no hint that our services are recognized. Even a little fear of us would be something. But no, no—they don't care a blacksmith's dump for us."

"Do they not even fear you?"

"Bless you, they never think of us. And after all we have done for the English people—staving off fire-damp, making earth soft, even altering the lay of the strata; and all for nothing. Wait till coals get scarcer. Geology takes everything to its own credit."

"Our case quite," said Oberon, gloomily. "Natural philosophy pretends to account for everything."

"And what will you do for us, if we let you go?" asked Titania.

"The thing is, what we cannot do," said

the Gnome King. "We know where to find diamonds for you, rubies, and sapphires—gems brighter than any in Queen Victoria's crown. We can find the red gold, and hammer it into cups, and sceptres, and fairy work. Besides, we can laugh, and sing, and dance. You should only hear us laugh. Laugh, my merry men all!"

With great gravity, the Earthmen laid down their spades; and laying hold of each other, as if for fear that they might fall down through sheer excess of hilarity, every man by his neighbour's shoulder, they burst forth into a cachination so unanimous, so loud, so infectious, that Queen Titania laughed till her eyes ran over, and Oberon and the Gnome King supported each other in convulsions of merriment, and the elves rolled over and over, screaming with delight. And just as suddenly as they had begun the Earthmen ended, picking up their spades and standing to order with faces of supernatural gravity.

“That used to please the miners in days gone by,” said their King. “Listen, now, while we sing.”

Then they sang, beating time with their spades—

“When the fires are bright and glowing,
When the quickened metal’s flowing,
When the perfect mould is ready,
When the brawny arms are steady,
Waiting for the work—
Think then, think of our labours,
Think of us, your unseen neighbours;
How by night and day we guide you,
How beneath, above, beside you,
Busy Earthmen lurk.”

“And they won’t think of us,” said the Gnome King, “devil a bit—I beg her Majesty’s pardon, the language of miners is sometimes strong—but they won’t think of us. Dance, my merry men all.”

They laid down their spades again, and began to dance with exceeding solemnity, while their metallic band played. Presently,

Puck began to caper solemnly in imitation ; and all the rest, following his example, danced behind the Earthmen, copying their movements.

“ Thank you, cousins of the earth,” said Oberon ; “ you shall come with us. We are going to a hotter climate than this ; but you are doubtless used to a still warmer temperature. Bring your great coats with you, for fear of catching cold.”

They took up their places in the outer ring, and sat down patiently, saying—

“ We will go with our friends the fairies.”

A rustling of the bushes ! A strange form—vast, uncouth, unwieldy, of no shape to speak of, and features which might have been fashioned by a child out of a piece of dough. It had a sort of wild, ridiculous terror in its fishy eyes, as it flopped on its big knees before the throne, and held up two great white hands.

“Let ME go, too !” it cried—“please, let ME go, too !”

“Pray, who are you, first ?” said Oberon.

“We know you not, uncourteous stranger.”

“I know him,” said Puck—“I know him, King. This is none other than Hobgoblin. He is Bogey. He it is who frightens little children in the dark and makes them afraid to go upstairs to bed.”

“Is that true ?” asked the King, sternly.

The Hobgoblin looked up, hesitatingly. There was little encouragement in the King’s eyes.

“I am,” he said. “It is true. I am Hobgoblin—Bogey—Old Bogey. But I only frighten children ; grown-up people were never afraid of me ; and now the very children are beginning to laugh at me.”

“And you,” exclaimed Titania — “you, whose whole delight and business it is to frighten the children that we love !—you, to dare !—Oh, Oberon, chase this creature from our presence.”

"No one believes in me," whined Hobgoblin, great tears rolling down his cheeks. "I get under the beds and in the cupboards; I lie in corners on staircases; I lurk in dark passages; and from John o' Groat's to Penzance there is not a nurse who does not laugh at me—hardly a child left afraid to sing all about a dark house. If you do not let me go with you, I shall have to go and live in a churchyard. Oh! bohoo! bohoo!—and I so afraid of ghosts!"

But he leaped up with a shriek, for a hundred fairies were pricking him with pins and darts, and scurried off into the outer darkness.

"I would follow thy fortunes, great King of Faërie."

The voice came from the hollow tree, and looking round, I saw its owner, a comical little old man with a hump on his back. His legs were bandy, his feet too big for his body; in

his hands a basket full of toys and children's fancies. They looked at him with surprise.

"Is it possible," he said, "that his Majesty does not know me? I am Saint Nicholas. I creep down the chimneys on New Year's Eve and Christmas Eve. I fill the children's baskets with Christmas and New Year gifts. They go to sleep expecting me; and when morning breaks, they find I have been by their bedside in the night. They all love me, the good Saint Nicholas. I would fain go with you."

"Stay," interposed Puck, with a lawyer-like air, "stay, my lord and king. Is there precedent for this? Can we have a saint among us? Have any of us ever been saints? Will he not spoil our innocent sports?"

"Nay, nay, friend Puck, I have never been canonized by the Church. Saint, Christian name—I mean first name; Nicholas, surname: no saint at all. Oh dear, no."

"Leave me to deal with him," said Puck.
"Why dost wish to go with us, worshipful
sir saint?"

"Because no one believes in me," said
Nicholas, sighing.

"Nonsense, nonsense! most wooden-headed
of saints. Pray, what time of the year is this?
Is it not Midsummer Eve? Did not the
children believe in thee last Christmas?"

"Surely, friend Puck."

"Then, friend Nicholas, pack up thy traps
and begone, and get thee to sleep and thank-
fulness. Surely, to be believed in once in
the year is enough in these hard times.
Good night, and interrupt us no more."

"Nay," said Titania, "let us part friends,
for we meet no more. Go on, good Saint
Nicholas, and please the children, though
they forget us. We love all those who love
children. Farewell."

Then passed a crowd of dim and shadowy

forms across the turf. One spoke. It was a voice as from the dead, bodiless and thin.

"We, O fairies, are the shades of shadows long since departed. We are forgotten and dead. But we come to bid you farewell."

"Who are you, then?"

"I," said one, "am the Wraith of Second Sight. I come from Scottish soil. I perished at Culloden. I——"

"Call the next," said the King.

"I am Cutty Sark," said the shade of a young and comely woman, stepping forward with a bold and assured air.

"And it was you," cried Puck, "who caught Tam O'Shanter's mare by the tail. Dear me! would I had been there to see! It is a merry tale. Have they forgotten you, dear Miss Cutty Sark?"

"They will not readily forget me," she said, proudly; "but no one fears now to wander on the heath after dark. It is high time I disappeared altogether. I suppose

it is no use asking permission to go with you ? ”

“ Not the slightest in the world,” said Titania, coldly. “ Your name alone—oh, it is absurd ! Go with respectable people, indeed ! ”

“ I,” said another, dressed in armour, with a chivalrous mien—“ I am Guy, Earl of Warwick. Here is my dun cow that I killed. Here, too, is the Dragon of Wantley. I go to Avilion, to meet Arthur. We shall come back together some time, according to Merlin’s prophecy. His Majesty King Arthur would have been here to-day himself, but one of the Guineveres is suffering from the toothache.”

“ He ! he ! he ! ” tittered a tottering old man, coming to the front. “ It is all rubbish and delusion. I *am* Merlin myself. Very sorry to have been the cause of any misunderstanding on your part, Sir Guy ; but there really is not the slightest chance of

Arthur ever coming back again. Dead as a door-nail he is! So are you, bless your heart! and so am I; but not forgotten—oh no, not forgotten! Pray, gracious company, accept the farewells of a poor old prophet, who does not see so clearly as he did what is going to happen. Nevertheless, if I may be permitted to quote myself, I may remind you of a prophecy which I made a long time ago. Singularly enough, it has never yet been fulfilled :—

“When the Thames runs red ;
When the Severn leaves its bed ;
When the whitebait grow to whales
In the Crystal Palace pails ;
When, despite the penal laws,
Every claimant wins his cause ;
When a British public begs
For a ballet without legs ;
When the French get back their clocks ;
When a bald man gets new locks ;
When all things that can't be, come,
Think of Merlin's Fo-Fi-Fum.”

“ He drivels, this old dotard,” said another

knight. "Go back to your Vivien, Merlin. King of the Fairies, we were once the Seven Champions of Christendom. I am St. George of Merry England. This is my friend, St. Denis of France. Put on your head, man!"—it was under his arm, smiling uncannily. "This is St. Andrew. Here is St. Patrick"—the Irish knight appeared to be in liquor. "The rest of us, I am sorry to say, are absent, being engaged in a desperate enterprise for the Princess Belle-Belle, of Mongolia, whose giants they are endeavouring to kill. Mongolia, as Mr. Keith Johnstone will inform you——"

"Know him intimately," murmured Puck, wagging his head.

"Is an island in the Pacific Ocean, not far from Greece; otherwise, I am sure they would have been happy to be present. It is, however, a melancholy occasion."

"And are you really forgotten, gallant gentlemen?" asked Titania.

“Clane,” said St. Patrick. “If it was not for Donnybrook Fair, Oi’d lave me ungrateful counthry!”

“It’s little thocht of we are noo,” said St. Andrew. “I live at Aberdeen myself, under the disguise of a Free Kirk meenister. Come, Sir King, and see me; and if the finest whusky——”

“Nay, nay,” said St. George, a fine and courtly gentleman of middle age, not unlike the Duke of Cambridge; “we will not intrude our sorrows on the King. We wish your Majesties farewell.”

He bowed and turned away. St. Patrick shed tears of genuine emotion; and St. Denis, who replaced his head under his arm, went away sighing profoundly. The long train vanished with them.

Another form stepped forward, brisk and impudent.

“I’m Number Nip,” he said, with a look round.

“Lord bless my soul!” cried Puck—“I mean my body and bones and wings; these mortals corrupt one—come to my manly breast, my cousin. Don’t you remember me, your cousin Puck, Robin Goodfellow, Will o’ the Wisp, Jack o’ Lantern?”

Number Nip burst into tears, and they fell into each other’s arms.

“We used, years ago, to pinch the slatternly maids, and trip up the drunken men. Oh! the fond recollections of the days gone by!”

A melancholy procession of sad-faced men, decked out with feathers, and carrying bows and arrows, passed into the ring.

“We are the shades of Red Indian legends,” said the leader. “I am Leaping Water. These are Elkfoot, Hawkeye, Whispering Wind——”

“Pooh!” said the Queen; “there never was anybody like you in the Indies, I know.”

They explained that it was America they had come from.

“Where is America?” asked the Queen of Puck.

He reflected, with an air of wisdom.

“You go,” he said, “to Athens. From Athens you may travel to the snows of Caucasus, if you like; but it is a long journey, and dangerous on account of the robbers and the jinns. You had better think twice before going. Thence to Devonshire; whence you may easily discern the peaks of the American hills. There be elephants and great bears.”

“Well, I don’t know you,” said the Queen; “but it is kindly meant, and we wish you farewell.”

They disappeared. Then a sound of senile laughter, and a hurrying through the air; and arriving all at the same moment, there sat at the King’s feet half a dozen old women on broomsticks.

"Goodness gracious!" said Titania, "I thought you were all gone long ago—done away with and vanished."

"So we were, my dearie," said the oldest and ugliest; "and now we are coming to see you go. Ho! ho!—it was time. They burned us. What will they do with you?"

"Do not be alarmed, my Queen," said Oberon—for Titania recoiled in terror—"they are but shadows. I will frighten them away."

He turned to the witches, and spoke—

"You poor old women," he said, "go back to your—to where you come from. Have you not found out by this time that you cannot impose upon us? Do you think that, when everybody believed in you but us, we shall believe in you when everybody else does not? Go hence, poor old creatures."

"He does not believe in us!" cried the astonished hags. "Eye of toad and leg of

newt—King Oberon does not believe in us !
Brain of bat and blindworm's foot—and
Puck dares to laugh at us ! Toe of frog
and mandrake's root—and Titania shakes her
head at us ! Adder's tongue and drowned
man's boot ! Ah ! if it were only the merry
days of old—where the screech-owl loves to
hoot !——”

“ Fly—vanish ! ” cried Oberon. “ Play up,
music ! ”

At the first sound of the pipes, the witches
mounted their broomsticks, and scurried,
shrieking, into the upper air.

There rolled to the King's feet a round
earthenware flask, tightly stopped and sealed.

The King cautiously picked it up, and,
after examining its outward appearance,
shook it at his ear.

“ There is no sound,” he said. “ It may
be Malvoisie or Sherris sack, or even good
Bordeaux. But the seal is strange. Will

my royal brother lend me a corkscrew ?
Puck, proceed to open it."

Puck took it cautiously, and applied the corkscrew—Oberon drawing his sword and standing on the defensive, for he suspected magic.

When the cork was drawn, a thin, light pillar of smoke came out. This mounted higher and higher, assuming the proportions and appearance of a vast giant, higher than the topmost tree, scowling and angry. In his hand he held a club.

"Who are you, great sir ?" shouted the King.

"Who are you, little pigmies ?" he returned.

"We are fairies."

"Don't know you. Where am I ?"

"You are in England."

"Don't know where England is. Where's that fisherman ? Gr—r—r !—if I could catch that fisherman ! I am a Genie from the 'Arabian Nights.'"

"My liege," said Titania, "I am afraid of him. Tell him to go."

"Sir Genie," said the King, "we are celebrating our last night. We go to the East shortly."

"I will go too ; perhaps I shall find that fisherman."

"Perhaps you will," said Puck. "As it was only two thousand years ago, you are very likely indeed to find him still living in his happy home, at his old trade. Meantime, sir, let me remark that your size is extremely inconvenient. At present none of us can see the moon."

"You don't want to see the moon. What good can the moon do you, I should like to know? Don't talk rubbish. Stay, you shall take me with you in the accursed bottle. Is it broken? No."

Puck held the bottle, while the vast mass slowly compressed itself, and went back whence it came.

"You will uncork me," said the Genie, "when you get there. If you don't, I'll—I'll——"

"Oh, sir!" said Puck, solemnly—"as if we should disobey so great a lord."

The last breath of smoke entered the bottle. In a moment, Puck had the cork in and the sealing-wax down.

"He must have been a very foolish creature, this savage Genie," said Oberon, laughing. "We will throw the flask into the sea."

A group of shadows, so dim that for a while it was hard to make them out. But I knew them.

"Who are ye, courteous sirs and ladies?"

"We come, King of Men—I mean of Fairies," said one of them, whom I recognized as Pallas Athênê, "we come from Smith's Classical Dictionary. We are the gods and goddesses of Greek Mythology."

"You don't look quite as you used to

in Shakspeare's time," said Ariel, gazing curiously at them.

"No? He must have read Lemprière," said Pallas, smiling.

"Perhaps," said Ariel.

"Oh, of course," said Puck, nodding his illiterate head—"of course he read Lemprière. I remember, indeed, that he did. Pray, who is this gentleman?"

"I am Zeus, the Cloud Compeller," said the majestic shade—"that is, I was. Alas! I am no more. This is my bride, Hêrê the Ox-eyed. We had youth and strength; but, you see, there was unfortunately something wrong—a mistake of some kind—about the promised immortality. Olympus is now but a barren rock; otherwise we should have been glad to invite you to dine at our royal banquets. Times are entirely changed. The philosophers made light of us: the Romans altered us. They took away my character, and told scandalous stories; but, of course,

Titania does not believe the things that have been said about me."

Titania had never heard any of the stories, and said so.

Hêrê laughed incredulously.

"This," continued Zeus, "is my child, Aphroditê. She is said to be beautiful. Pardon the partiality of a—a—according to some—a parent."

Aphroditê stepped forward, smiling. Around her steps sprang new and beautiful flowers. The music lifted in soft and joyous strains. Every eye brightened. Ariel fell at her feet, kissing them, and crying out in passionate admiration of her beauty. Puck lay grovelling. Oberon's eyes grew softer. There was a feeling as if sorrow was dead, and nothing possible evermore but the sweetness of love and passion.

"You see," said Aphroditê, with a smile, "things change and pass away. But I never die."

“Foolish creature!” said Pallas. “It is love that never dies—love that yearns for its mate. You are but the ideal woman—the loveliest form that poet’s eye has ever seen. You, like all of us, are passed away and gone. I, too, am gone. But wisdom lives.”

“And I,” said Zeus. “But a fuller reign has followed mine.”

“And I,” said Arês. “But men fight still, and valour always lives. We are all gone away and departed.”

Aphroditê tore the cestus from her waist, and, bursting into tears, vanished in the darkness.

Pallas picked up the glittering thing.

“She will ask for it again, by and by,” she said. “Farewell, kindly people. You were not so wise, nor so profound, nor were you so gloriously sung as we. Nor had you any symbolism in your existence, as we, who represented so many things. Still, you were

always good and kind. Once more, farewell !”

Little Eros, running into the Fairy Queen's arms, sobbed out—

“Farewell, farewell ! I have ever loved you. I love all folk who are kind to Love.”

So they vanished ; and for a moment all was still.

Then followed a rude clashing of weapons and blare of trumpets resounding through the forest.

“Who is there ?” asked the King. “Go see, my Ariel.”

He went, and instantly returned.

“My liege, a deputation from the Siege of Troy. The Greeks and Trojans have unfortunately quarrelled on the way ; and Troilus has been fighting with Ulysses. But Ulysses has run away, and I have dismissed the unmannerly churls.”

“’Tis well. We receive no more. Play, music. Sing another chorus.”

“Oh, who—oh, who are so happy as we,
On the wild wood's grassy ground?
As the wayward wind in the heavens free,
And bright as the flowers around.

“Though lighter than falling leaf of the rose
Our step on the young spring grass ;
By the ring that we leave, the wayfarer knows
When Titania's revels pass.

“We shun the winter, we shun the day,
But ours is the night of June :
When the first bird twitters upon the spray
We vanish away with the moon.

“We love the eve, and we love the night,
We come when the day hath fled :
But the morning star is our sign of flight,
And we part when the East grows red.”

CHAPTER IV.

“These were the pranks she played among the cities
Of mortal men ; and what she did to sprites
And gods, entangling them in her sweet ditties,
To do her will and show their subtle slights,
I will declare another time.”

SHELLEY.

OBERON turned to the King of Gnomes, and said, “Fair King, we will show you and your men some scenes of our life in England.” He waved his wand, and instantly all disappeared, except the King and Queen and the Earthmen. The lights died out, and a black darkness lay before the throne.

Gradually, a faintly luminous cloud was visible. Then this grew brighter. As the

light became stronger, the music played louder. A series of prismatic coloured clouds rolled away, like some successive curtains at a theatre—red giving way to orange, this to yellow, yellow to green, green to brown, brown to indigo, and this to violet. Lastly, all rolled together, and a white light fell upon everything.

It was a subterranean hall that I looked upon, decorated with plashing fountain and countless jets of light, supported by lofty columns ; within, the fairies dancing and singing. The music suddenly ceased. Presently was heard the sound of a single flute, playing “ The Girl I left behind me.” The fairies stopped and listened. The piper drew nearer ; and presently a face—a man’s face, ugly, hairy, surprised—appeared at the end of the hall. Instantly the columns fell, the lights went out, and where had been a hall was a blank and barren heath, and a ragged piper, scratching his head, and look-

ing round and round ; while the moon shone through the driving clouds, and the wind whistled among the rags that covered the man.

“Faith, now,” he murmured, “that’s an odd thing ! Where’s the fairies, bedad ?”

He walked about the moor, tapping the ground, to find if there was any hollow place by which the great hall might be approached again.

“Was I standing, now, or was I lying on the ground ? Was it subterraneous entirely, or was it high above the airth ? It’s bothered I am !”

He went on his way, but the fairies drew him by invisible cords, so that he wandered from marsh to marsh, falling into the bogs, pricking himself with briars, and helplessly adrift. In the morning, they brought him back to the place where he started the night before. The colleen came running out to meet him.

“Arrah ! then, and sure it’s Tim the Piper come back again.”

“It is that same,” he said. “Lord be betwuxt us and harm ! I’m clane done with the good people.”

The clouds fell again.

“One of our common stories,” said Oberon. “Everybody knows it. Now we will show you others not so well known.”

This time, a garden in front of a noble house. A river rolled its waters at the foot of the lawn. Beyond the house, a wood ; beyond the wood, blue hills. A soft-hued sun over all. On the lawn, a party of four—an old gentleman with his daughter, and two young men dressed in the fashion of King Charles the Second’s time. Fair was the girl, as only English girls are fair ; proud and stately her father ; proud, if not stately, the two young men, in whose faces dissipation and excess had already laid their mark.

One of them bore a guitar, which, as he lay on the grass, he touched with careless hand.

"Sing to us, Sir Vyvyan," said the girl.

"Nay—I did but bring the guitar in the hope that its mistress would herself sing to us."

"Alas! what has a country girl to sing? I know but two or three ditties—'Come Lasses and Lads,' and 'The Bailiff's Daughter,' and such."

"The country ditties please thy father, lass," said the old gentleman; "but doubtless they have a rustic flavour. We are only simple shepherds in this secluded place, Sir Vyvyan. Sing us 'When the King shall enjoy his own again.' 'Tis a good song, child."

"A good song," said the other cavalier, "but a thought old-fashioned. Besides, his Majesty, God bless him——"

"Amen!" said all, taking off their hats.

"His Majesty has got his own again by

this time, and knows how to enjoy his own in royal fashion ; and the pestilent Roundheads know better than to show their crops and faces."

"If they did," said the girl, "Sir Vyvyan would chop them all to pieces."

"Girl, girl!"

"Nay, father, I did but jest; and you know my heart is in the right place. But Sir Vyvyan looked so fierce. But sing us a court song, Sir Vyvyan, one of those things that they are so fond of in London."

Sir Vyvyan laughed, and taking the guitar—it was in tune—began—

"Flower fair, oh ! tell me where

Hues like thine, if thou mayst speak,
Borrowed were ?

'Whence should they, sir ?

I took mine from Cynthia's cheek.'

"Waves that smile round bay and isle,

Why do ye so blithely trip ?

'Because to-day she came this way,

We caught the smile on Cynthia's lip.'

“Birds sing now on every bough,
Why is this day's song so glad?
‘It is the note your Cynthia taught,
Thus sings she by wood and mead.’

“Whispering trees, that in the breeze
Sigh a murmur soft and sweet,
What is't you say?
‘We heard to-day
Cynthia fair her love repeat.’

“Little stream with waves that seem
Dancing down in boundless glee,
Tell me why?
‘Ah! she came by;
We caught the laugh she meant for thee.’

“Sweet west wind: thou, to my mind,
Laden with all perfumes art,
Whence thy breath?
‘’Tis from the wreath
Thy Cynthia wears upon her heart.’

“Whispering trees and perfumed breeze,
Laughing stream and smiling sea,
Birds that sing, and everything,
Go bid my Cynthia come to me!”

“Truly,” said the old man, “a gay and
gallant song. Tell me it is not some French

ware, but good sound English workmanship."

"Thank you, Sir Vyvyan," said the girl. "It is doubtless one of Mr. Herrick's."

"I am flattered, Lady Catherine. It is not Herrick's, but my own. Good sound English workmanship, my lord, if I am an Englishman."

"Indeed," said the young lady, who seemed bent on not liking anything that Sir Vyvyan said or did. "Sir Vyvyan is a knight of very excellent accomplishments, father. He makes the verses which he sings so well himself. But come, the dew is falling. You must not catch cold, father. Gentlemen, we meet at supper."

She moved away with her father, leaving the two courtiers on the lawn.

"It is well, Vyvyan," said the one who had not yet spoken, "that your suit depends not upon the favour of the lady. If it did——"

"If it did, Master Harry, there would be small chance of your getting anything out of its success. Is all arranged?"

"First, let us remind each other of the advantages. It is a goodly property, Sir Vyvyan."

"It is."

"Ten thousand pounds a year, I make it."

"Perhaps it is."

"Two thousand down for Harry Markham, or the match does not come off."

"We arranged for one thousand."

"We did. It suits me to change the arrangement. Rearrange now for two thousand. Don't bluster, sir knight, or perhaps I shall put a stop to the business altogether. Two thousand."

"Well, well," returned the other, impatiently, "be it so. Tell me all you have done."

"You will make my excuses for me at supper. After supper, when the old man is

asleep, and the varlets are all in the kitchens stuffing their greedy holds, bring out the lady as usual upon the lawn. Come without your sword. Stroll as near the wood as you can without exciting suspicion. When you turn to go back, four stout fellows in masks will rush from the trees and slip the girl. She will be gagged and borne away before she has time to shriek. As for you, we are going to gag and blindfold you, to prevent suspicion."

"Where will you take her to?"

"Till nightfall—there is little enough night now—to the edge of the park only; then, gagged and blindfold, across country to my own place, whither you may come to-morrow."

Sir Vyvyan was silent awhile. Libertine as he was, his soul revolted from a deed of such daring atrocity. But his debts were too pressing. He held out his hand, saying gaily—

"*Au revoir*, then, since it must be done.

'Tis a pity that she refuses me on any other terms. Be ready at nine, Harry ; and, mind, no violence."

The sun grew low, and presently the great bell of the Grange rang for supper. The twilight of June fell on the long grass slope, and deepened the shadows in the wood. Nine struck, and voices were heard whispering in the trees. Then there came from the house a female figure, wrapped in the blue mantle which Lady Catherine had worn in the afternoon. She stooped, looking for something in the grass.

"My lady said it was left out here, on the grass ; and the dew will spoil it, and put it out of tune. Perhaps 'tis—— Ah!"

For at a low whistle, four men, masked and armed, rushed from the wood, and seized her, shrieking. Before they succeeded in gagging her—for she was a stout wench—she had torn the mask from one of them, and made the woods echo with her cries.

Among the first who ran out was Sir Vyvyan himself, pale and trembling. He was followed by the serving-men, armed with whatever weapons came handiest.

“Keep back, you fools!” he cried, endeavouring to prevent their rushing into the wood.

“Keep back! You mean go on, I suppose?” shouted the butler, heading the attack.

But there was no fight; for the next moment the girl herself had escaped from her assailants, and was rushing breathless across the green.

“Oh, my lady!” she cried—“my lady, have a care. It’s you they want, not me! ‘We’ve caught the maid instead of the mistress,’ said Mr. Markham himself.”

“Mr. Markham! What is this, Sir Vyvyan?”

“How should I know, my lord?” returned he, sullenly.

“But you do know, sir,” said the girl; “for Mr. Markham said, as he rode off, ‘Sir Vyvyan has missed the mark this time.’”

“Bring Sir Vyvyan’s horse, saddled and bridled. Come, Kate, this is no place for you,” said the old lord. “I regret, Sir Vyvyan, that I am not ten years younger, that I might demand the only reparation possible.”

“I regret, my lord, that I cannot give it you, for the same reason.”

They bowed, and the old man passed into the house, Sir Vyvyan standing, pale and scornful, in the doorway. Presently his horse was brought to him. All this time the murmurs of the servants were becoming more and more threatening. At last an ominous whisper went through them—

“To the horsepond with him!”

Sir Vyvyan mounted slowly, glancing with an evil eye among the men. The murmurs

became cries ; they hooted and hissed. One threw a stone, which missed. Sir Vyvyan half turned his horse, and faced them all, with drawn sword.

They fell back. He turned again, followed to the park gates by the hooting rabble, not one of whom dared to be the first to attack the glittering gentleman.

Once outside the park, he put up his sword, and without even turning to look at the rustics, rode off along the bridle-path at a quick trot.

And in the scene, which changed like a panorama, I saw how he made straight for Harry Markham's place ; how he met him on the steps ; how hot words were interchanged ; and how, in the midsummer moon, two bright blades crossed for a moment, and one form fell.

A lofty turret chamber, lit with a single oil lamp. A gray, wizened old man. A fur-

nace, and chemical instruments and bottles. Great books lay on the chairs, on the table, on the floor. A deep red, flameless fire—a crucible upon it; and over it bending the withered old man, watching with hungry eyes and shaky hands.

“The *aurum potabile*,” he murmured—“the Elixir of Life! A short half-hour and it will be mine! This time it shall not fail me! Ninety years of age—ninety years to-day: and all my fellows killed or dead; disappeared, by war and battle and plague! And I—ha! ha!—going to begin a new life, to renew my youth!”

He looked into the mirror, and rubbed his hands.

“Ha! ha! Now shall all these wrinkles change into the smooth cheeks of youth. Now I shall find out the secrets of what men call happiness. Now I shall know what it is to love a woman. Gray hairs, you shall become brown! Sunken cheeks,

you shall be full again! Bending shoulders,
you shall be upright! Oh, that the time
was come!

“Half an hour! But patience, patience!
A short half-hour against a never-ending
youth—a little delay, and then the perennial
flow of enjoyment and pleasure!

“Youth! I had no youth! What to me
were the smiles of maidens? What to me
were the greetings by the fountain, and the
festivities in the house? I had my work,
day and night—to learn my father’s secrets,
to carry on his labours. My ninety years
of life have been ten years of childhood and
eighty years of unremitting toil. But for
this, surely the time has not been wasted;
for I have snatched from the heavens their
secret, and have made myself immortal.
No feasting, no delights for me! A long,
long search! In the town below, not one
who knows my face or recollects that I am
in being! A life of care and thought,

troubled by the fear of premature death before my secret is known!

“What shall I do with my new and brighter life? My bottle will last me a hundred years, and it will take twenty to make more. I shall get a disciple, and teach him the secret. I shall carry my treasure at my heart, and draw it drop by drop: every drop, another year of life! Then shall I revel with the best—safe of my life so long as I have my bottle. Then I shall explore the pleasures of the life I have looked at from my tower, and find out why these common people—these ignorant, poor, miserable wretches—can yet laugh and be merry with each other. For perhaps I too, at last, shall get a light heart. Women are said in the books to love the young and rich. Good: I shall be young and rich. I shall be, if I please, nobly born; because all the honours of the world lie ready for him who is rich enough to obtain them.

“And if I tire—but ten short minutes more!—of man and his pleasures, it is but to come back here and wrest more secrets from Nature, day by day; never getting tired, never exhausting the exhaustless, till at last between me and the Great Creator there stands no secret but the last—the unanswerable secret of new life. And perhaps—perhaps——

“But five minutes more! Oh, moment long looked for, come at last! How shall I——”

A little noise startled him from his meditation. He rushed to the furnace; but too late—too late! The crucible lay overturned upon the coals, and its priceless contents, the work of seventy years, were poured into the fire. Seeing his work so ruined, he fell senseless to the ground.

When he recovered, and raised his head, he saw that the old turret chamber was changed. He was in a room in the town

below. Outside, the bells were clanging and ringing ; inside, a wedding—his own wedding. He himself—bright, tall, handsome—a young man of four and twenty, was sitting with his bride's hand in his.

“This is what should have been,” said a Voice. “Learn the Mystery and Greatness of love.”

They drank to the happiness of the newly married pair. They praised the courage and the generous qualities of the bridegroom himself, and the sweetness and beauty of the bride—his own. As he looked—this poor old ruined alchemist—his heart beat and his eyes softened, for he felt at last what love would mean.

But the scene changed. This time, a house, with children playing and laughing—his children. As he watched their pretty ways, and saw their mother, grave, kind, tender, watching their every movement, his heart beat again with a higher pleasure

still ; for he was a father, and loved his boys.

“ Learn,” said the Voice, “ the Sweetness of love ! ”

Then one sickened and drooped. It was the time of the Great Plague. He, in the vision, sent the mother and the rest to the top of the house, and stayed below with the sick boy. The hours of watching passed away slowly. The boy grew delirious. In his wandering, he prattled of his father—himself. Outside the door he could hear the mother praying and sobbing. By the bedside he, too, praying that the life of his eldest might be spared. But all in vain. For the boy, throwing his poor arms about his father’s neck, laid his head against his cheek, and died.

“ Learn,” said the Voice that spoke before, “ the Bitterness of love, the Sacredness of grief, and the great Mystery of death ! ”

Once more he looked. He saw two old,

old people. About them, children and grandchildren. Their hearts were full of memories, sweet and sacred. They had had their joys together, and their sorrows. They had suffered and borne each other's burdens. They had grown a part of each other. As he looked, the content and trust that lay in the figure's heart passed into his, and he lay back, happy.

"You want to live—you?" whispered the Voice; "and this is what you should have been—not tired of life, but content to die."

Then they showed him his many years of grimy, selfish, anxious life, with no thought save for himself—no care for the people who struggled around him;—his life all centred in that room: no nobleness in his search for Nature's secrets, because he wanted them all for his own good. And then he looked at the broken crucible, and sighed.

Lastly, they showed him what he might

have become if his crucible had given up its terrible secret: how selfish he would be, how more and more incapable of happiness, because he alone would be separated from his fellow-men; how his perpetual youth would be a perpetual misery, his life become a burden to him; how he would sit down and cry for death, which would never come to him; how he would curse the day when he found the Elixir of Life.

The clouds rolled over all; and I know not what became of the old alchemist.

This time, a cold and cheerless night, on a desolate heath; a girl, very young, wandering backwards and forwards, wringing her hands.

“He loves me not! He used to say he loved me. I must die.”

Close to her lay the dark, deep pool she sought—fringed with tall reeds, and covered with green weeds. One step more, and she

would have found it at her feet. She stopped, held back by an invisible Hand.

“Oh, to die!” she murmured; “to finish the long waiting—to end an agony greater than I can bear!”

She quickened her steps; but in the dark and lonely path she did not know whither they led her. They were leading her back to her own house. As she went along, the Wind, sighing in the briars, sang a song of comfort to her.

“He is untrue,” it sang, “and thou art unhappy. Well, beyond thee lies the pool. It is dark, and deep, and cold. There wilt thou lie—a silent witness of his falsehood and thy love. Thither will come, when they find thee, thy father, white with sorrow; thither, all who have known and loved thee; thither, the idle and curious, eager to gaze upon the dead features of one who could not endure her lot; thither, too, will come one who has loved thee better all his life—more truly,

more unselfishly,—than he who has deceived thee. Till all who have loved thee die, no happy day shall be theirs. Take thy revenge. Go, drown—drown—drown thy life, young and much loved, in the pool before thee.

“He is old—the father. He has no child except thyself. Is it not well done, after being his joy for eighteen years, to kill him with sorrow? It will help thee to die, knowing that he will die too. Unselfish girl, take the leap—the pool is not far off!

“And the other, who has played thee false? He thought he loved you, but he loves Phœbe better. Punish him for not knowing his own mind. Make his life one long chain of sorrow and remorse. This will be well done.

“As for Edward, he loves thee still. That is not his fault. It will help thee to die—will it not?—to know that bitterness will be brought upon him till he die too.”

Thus the Wind. But as she wandered

on, her footsteps slackened, and her clasped hands fell at her side; and suddenly she started back—and there, before her, stood her own house, silent and asleep, and the little gate open by which she had passed. She burst into silent weeping, and prayed to be forgiven her great wickedness, as she crept back into the house, unseen and unsuspected.

Once more the clouds fell, and rolled back for the last time.

A rich, well-wooded, open country; the heart of a forest, rolling hill and valley, where stately trees stand like kings guarding the land—their gnarled and knotted branches, like so many stout arms, bidding defiance to the storm, yet scarred by the many battles they have fought; the falling year clothing them with a rich prodigality of golden foliage, and the ground all piled and heaped with the leaves of this year and the last.

Under one of the oaks, in the long grass—it is afternoon, and the warm October sun is full upon his young face—lies a Cavalier in the dress of Charles the First's time. His arm is bound with a cloth; his cheeks are worn with suffering; his eyes are turned to the west, with a sort of eager hope and longing. He lies quite still and motionless.

“Four by the clock, if I guess right; and Marian should be here by three. What can keep her from coming? Surely—but that is impossible—no one can have dogged her. Her father cannot suspect. And I am thirsty, and dare not go down to the brook.”

A light step and a rustling in the bushes, and a young girl stood before him. She held a basket in her hand, and looked flushed and terrified.

“I could not come the usual way, Everard. Reuben, the new steward, met me at the great gate of the house, and asked me

‘Whither away?’ I told him — Heaven forgive the falsehood——”

“Heaven smiles at love’s falsehoods, fair sweetheart. It only never forgives those who——”

“Oh, Everard! If you were dying, you would pay me compliments. But it is too serious. I dare not trust a soul.”

“Not even Dorothy?”

“No. I saw Sergeant Put-on-the-whole-Armour kissing her last night in the garden.”

“Doubtless the kiss of a saint. Do you think she prefers the kisses of that devout warrior to fidelity to her mistress?”

“Nay, Everard, I know not. But if she loves the man— See, now—stop kissing my hand, now—see what I have brought you. A venison pasty, bread, two flasks of wine. Can you make them last till to-morrow night, when I will endeavour to bring you more? And once this week over, the soldiers will go

away, and my father with them ; and you can escape. But, oh, Everard ! the risk to you ! And it is unmaidenly in me to come here alone, day after day, and even by night. If my father knew——”

“Your father knows at least that Sir Everard is a man of honour.”

“Alas !” said the girl, “we are fallen upon evil times ! Hark !—what is that ? The sound of arms and men ! Quick—quick—Everard ! they are not fifty yards off ! Pray Heaven they do not see us !”

She hurried the Cavalier, who had been wounded in the leg as well, and moved with difficulty, within the hollow of the oak, and knelt in front, looking fearfully through the bushes.

There were six men, dressed in leather jerkins and steel breastplates, with iron hats. In their hands, pikes ; at their belts each bore a great pistol.

“’Twas by a hollow oak you told us we

should find him, Serjeant Put-on-the-whole-Armour. What did the girl tell you ? ”

“She said her mistress went forth daily with a basket of provisions ; that she followed her once out of curiosity ; that she traced her, at nightfall, to a hollow oak, where lay a Cavalier, wounded at Worcester—none other than Sir Everard Arden himself, for whom we have a warrant and a reward. She told me to put myself in a line with Hunstall Hill and the church tower, and half an hour would bring us to the spot. Behold, I see the hill and the tower in a line. But where is the oak ? ”

“Alas ! ” murmured the girl, “my Everard, we are lost ! ”

She fell upon his breast, silently weeping. Both listened eagerly.

“Hunstall Hill, methinks, would be in a line with the church tower for miles around,” said the leader of the party.

And then I saw what had five minutes

before seemed a sharp peak now showed like a broad and flat down ; so that no point could be taken to connect with the church tower. Also, what had been a few straggling bushes and brambles between the men and the tree, looked now like an impenetrable thicket. They stumbled over roots, they stepped upon adders. They wandered backwards and forwards, examining all the trees but the right one. And then the evening fell, and a heavy mist arose.

“Sergeant,” said the captain, “thou art a fool and an ass !”

“Nevertheless,” the sergeant replied, meekly, “the maiden did give me such and such instruction, even as I set it forth.”

“Thou art a fool again, and a worse fool than I suspected. Dost not see that she was fooling thee ? Sergeant, the wiles of the devil have been at work. Pray, why did the maiden tell thee all this ?”

“Passages of Christian affection have been

conducted betwixt us," said the sergeant, with a snuffle. "Verily, I have looked upon the maiden with eyes of liking."

"Liking, and this day's march is the end of it, and Sir Everard is doubtless escaped by the other side of the hill! Sergeant, thou art indeed an ass! Back, men, and let us thank the Lord for the wits He hath given us!"

They strode off. As they marched through the forest the mist went with them, so that they lost their way.

Then the lovers lifted their heads; and the girl, falling on her knees, betook herself to prayer and praise aloud. As she prayed, another step—but so light that neither heard it—outside the oak; and in a moment a man of middle age, of grave aspect and gravely clad, stood at the opening of the hollow tree, and looked in. The moon fell full upon the praying girl and the face of her lover, who gazed at her as Dante gazed at Beatrice.

"Marian!" cried her father, for it was he.

She started to her feet like a frightened deer.

“Blame her not,” interposed her lover—
“unless, indeed, she is to blame for saving
the life of a Royalist!”

“Nay, Sir Everard,” said he, “I come not
to reproach. I have known all along the secret
of these daily visits. I trust my daughter,
I trust my old friend’s son. Only the bab-
bling of a mischievous girl had nearly ruined
all. I have procured your pardon, young
hothead, on condition that you go across the
seas. That condition we will get removed
at an early opportunity; and perhaps you
may find Holland not so unpleasant a country,
with Marian to help dissipate the spleen.”

Marian fell weeping on her father’s neck;
and we saw them wending their way from
the forest in happiness and love.

CHAPTER V.

“ ‘Alas !’ quoth Puck, ‘a little random elf,
Born in the sport of nature, like a weed,
For simple sweet enjoyment of myself.’ ”

HOOD.

PUCK, who had sat perfectly still during the performances, lifted up his head when they had finished, and spoke.

“King Oberon,” he began, “I no longer know if I exist or not. Men used to call me Puck, Robin Goodfellow, Brownie. I was their friend, though I played them a thousand pranks. They speak of me no more—I am forgotten. May I tell my sorrows ?”

“Speak on, dear Puck,” said Titania.

“It is but a short week since I went into a farmer’s cellar, all out of pure kindness and

friendship. His cider was fermenting ; his cheese turning mouldy. I worked the roller round. I freshened the cheeses. And then, for I was athirst with my labours, I drank but one small cask of ale ; and waited till he should come down, to hear the thanks that once I should have got. He came—with him his little daughter. He looked at his cider.

“ ‘ Good,’ he said ; ‘ that’s the mixture I put in yesterday.’

“ Then at his cheeses.

“ ‘ Looks as if the place was damp !’ said he.

“ Then he came to the cask. Some of it lay in the sawdust, where I had spilt it.

“ ‘ Hallo !’ he said. ‘ A whole cask gone ?’

“ ‘ Oh, father !’ said the little girl, ‘ it must be Brownie !’

“ ‘ Brownie be dommed !’ said the farmer. ‘ There’s a leak in the cask. Run up and tell your mother, child.’

"In the dairy, the maid was churning.

" 'Drat the butter!' she said—'it won't come!' and churned away till her arms ached. Then I gave it one turn when she was not looking, and the butter came.

" 'Good gracious!' she said, 'it's here all the time!'

" 'Mary,' said the little child, gravely, 'that's just what Brownie does, and the fairies!'

" 'Don't talk nonsense about fairies,' said Mary. 'It's all rubbish from your picture books.'

"At night I pinched her black and blue. She got no sleep. But even then she was unconvinced. Said it was fleas.

"Next morning, I put things to rights in the parlour, before she came down. Only said master's pipe had been uncommonly tidy last night.

"So the morning after, when she had put things straight, I upset them again. Her

mistress called her a good-for-nothing girl, and threatened to send her home to her mother. But no faith—no belief—none!

“That night I met two young fellows coming home from a Young Men’s Mutual Improvement Society, where they had been hearing a lecture on the debasing influence of old superstitions. They were talking about it as they went along. They walked on stoutly. Presently the path lay through a copse, where the moonlight touched the old trees, and made strange, fantastic shapes out of the branches. I sat on an old trunk in the moonlight, and made faces at them. They pretended not to see; so I became more hideous, and threw about my arms in mockery. Then they fairly stopped, trembling, and catching each other by the arms.

“‘Lord, have mercy upon us!’ cried one.

“‘And save Thy Church militant here on

earth,' replied the other, from the Liturgy, as soon as he could recollect anything from the Prayer-book.

" ' Bob—it's—it's a—real ghost.'

" Bob only replied by the chattering of his teeth. But the moon went behind a cloud, and I left off jibbering.

" ' I think it's only a tree. Let's go and look.'

" They found nothing but a tree ; but that did not prevent them from tripping over a blackberry bush, and scratching their hands and faces.

" This time I was with my lantern in the marsh, and crying like a lost child. Their nerves were already a good deal shaken.

" ' Wh—what is that ? ' cried the first who saw me.

" ' It is a light. Is it a Will o' the Wisp ? '

" ' No, nonsense ; there's no such thing—Mr. Hardnails said so to-night. It's a child. Listen. Come to its help.'

“ They grasped their sticks, and made for the light. I kept away from them, leading them deeper and deeper into the marsh, till their way was lost ; and it was not till daylight that they got out again—wet, torn, and weary.

“ And after all, their friends only accused them of getting drunk.”

“ You all know me,” said Mab, softly, lifting her delicate face—“ you all know me. Hear now my story, and how I spent my last nights in England.

“ Two days ago, I found an old woman weeping by the fireside for her long-lost sailor boy. I sent her to sleep, and showed him to her, bright, strong, prosperous, but far away. She awoke again to hope, because she believes in dreams.”

“ How if her son does not return ? ” asked the Gnome King.

“ Nay, he will not, because he lies ten

fathoms deep in the sea for many a year. But she will die soon ; and while she lives she will be happier.

“ I found two fair-haired children, sleeping, with interlaced arms, under the shade, their cheeks almost touching each other, for they had fallen asleep with a kiss ; and while they slept I showed a dream of life—a panorama, painted in childish colours, lay stretched before them ; and they saw themselves straying, hand in hand, for ever beside the stream of Time. They grew up together, and had the same sports ; they had no troubles, because he was so strong and she was so good and wise ; they never grew old, and they never grew tired ; they were never sorry, never anxious, never ill. In the dream one spoke to the other, and said—

“ ‘ We will always love each other, and our life shall be as those before us.’

“ Then, in their dream, they kissed and promised eternal love.”

“How if they separate, and never see each other again?”

“Nay, I know not,” said Mab. “I cannot prophesy—only I can soothe and charm; and my children awaking, found that each had had the same dream. And then they kissed, and went home hand in hand. Surely, it will be good for the children to keep this dream in their minds as the years go on. Love may die; but courage, strength, and patience will last them all their lives.

“Next, I saw a clergyman, brooding over his own advancement. I threw back the curtain of Time while he slept, and showed him his own youth.

“‘What do I see?’ he asked.

“‘Look again,’ I said. ‘Recognize that pale brow, and those eager eyes. Do you not know the boy, so full of holy fire, so eager for the future, so careful of the mother who pinched for his sake? Remember how the victory was won and the prize obtained.

Think of the early days, when your holy duty was above your own interest, and to lead poor men to the love of God was a higher thing than to make yourself a bishop.'

"He read the past; and then I showed him the present, and how the spiritual life in him was deadened by his ambition and greed. He awoke with the firm resolve to fight the demon of self, who had well-nigh bound him hand and foot.

" 'Shade of my youth!' he cried. 'I have sinned against my glorious youth. I have sinned against my promise and my hope.'

"I found the little schoolboy asleep in the boarding-house. I took him away with me, and showed him his home, his pony, and his dog. He played with his sisters, he bathed in the pool, he fished in the river; and he awoke in the morning freshened and happier.

"To the exile—for I sometimes wilfully deceive—I showed his country, and his old

friends greeting his return. To the poet, I gave the fame which he will never get from men. In his dream, he was the idol of the people. They sang his songs in the streets ; they cried after him when he walked abroad ; they showered their honours on his head ; they fanned their own enthusiasm with his burning words.

“ I found the student poring over his books, conscious of the many better runners in the race than himself. In his dreams I showed him his own name first on the list ; and he heard the shouts of his friends, and was happy.

“ I made poor girls who will never be loved dream of the tender cares of a home ; young men who will never find a girl to love them, dream of bright eyes and fond hearts. I made the sick man dream of health ; and, lastly, to the profligate, worn-out and case-hardened, I showed the simple and kindly pleasures of the home life, so that, if for a

moment only, a pang of remorse shot across his seared and selfish breast. Tell me, Titania, have I done well?"

"My Mab, if only thou hadst been always so," said the Queen.

"Then take my sceptre and my crown, for I am no longer Queen of Dreams."

She laid both down at Titania's feet, [and resumed her place with a sad smile.

Then Ariel took his lute, and sang another song :—

"Over the dew-dropped lawn,
Brushing the drops away,
Fairies have come and gone :
Who are so merry as they?
Over the dew-dropped lawn,
Under the greenwood bough,
Dance they as dance we now.

"Merrily dance the waves,
Under the rocks in the bay,
Into the dark, deep caves,
Leaping and flying away.
Merrily dance the waves,
Merrily over the sand,
As we do, hand in hand.

“Waves the ripening sheaf,
 Silvered white in the moon ;
Dances the delicate leaf,
 Stirred by the west wind’s tune.
Dances the delicate leaf,
 High on the trembling tree,
 Merrily as dance we.

“Fitly on fairies’ round
 Dances the village ring ;
Where the fairies’ songs resound,
 Fitly the folk may sing.
Merrily dance around
 In the ring of the joyous elves :
 Dance we now ourselves.

“Hand in mine, sweetheart,
 Let the tossing ringlets rest,
One of them light on my heart,
 All of them deep in my breast,
Never from me to part.
 Play on, harp and horn ;
 Dance we till break of morn.

“Voice with voices ringing,
 Chanting an ancient lay ;
Lads and maidens singing,
 While we the night away.
Flowers in wild sport flinging,
 Dance we till purple dawn
 Reddens the moonlit lawn.”

CHAPTER VI.

“And wilt thou leave me thus?
Say nay—say nay, for shame.”

SIR T. WYATT.

“THESE are some of the stories with which we fill men’s brains,” said Oberon. “You have seen our sports and heard our stories, fair brother of the Gnome Land. What now remains? To begone. Are there any changelings to restore before we part?”

“Alas!” said Titania, “there are none. I had one but a short time since. I stole him from his mother’s nest when he was but a year old, and kept him till he was seven. I had filled his young soul with all sweet and tender fancies. I had breathed music into

his ears, which he should remember in after-years. With me he had roamed the mountains; and learned to love all things that live. He forgot in a few days the Fairy Queen, his nurse; but he remembered my teaching, and the longing for beauty with which I had filled his soul. He was to be a poet—I meant him to be the poet of the people. I wanted him to bring the folk back a little from their feverish thirst for wealth, and get them once more to love nature. He was to turn the hearts of the rich to consider the poor, and the hearts of the poor so that they should not for ever be envying the rich. For oh, Oberon, the rich in this country grow ever richer, and the poor poorer! The struggle for life is harder, the temptations are greater, selfishness and greed increase: luxury grows more and more, corrupting the life-blood of the people, eating into their courage like a cancer, and the sweet contentment is wholly gone. I hoped

that he would stand in the gap, and stay the flood. Perhaps, too, I hoped—for we are ever an unreasoning folk—that people would cease to burn with an insatiable desire for knowledge. Why can they not be content to know, and yet not understand, some things? There is a sweet bliss in ignorance—credulity is not always productive of evil.”

“Did he so teach the people?” asked Oberon.

“No. He is a great poet, but he has left our greenwood life. He does not sing to the people, but to his own learned kind. The sweet music which I taught him is wedded to the ways of men. He deals in mighty problems of the brain; and if the common people read him, they cannot understand. A poet, because I made him one; but of the town, not of the forest. I have had many changelings, but none I loved so well as this fair-haired English child, now the care-worn fighter among men. I saw him

but a week ago. He was ill, and they had sent him away to the pleasant coppices of his boyhood. I found him sitting in one of his old haunts, thinking. Through his brain floated dim memories of things long forgotten. He could not give them shape or utterance till I whispered in his ears. Then for a little he gazed upon the picture of the past, and saw Elf-land once again—only for a little; for when I let him go, the troubles of the world once more clouded his brain. I let him go: he is lost to us. Yet, from time to time, a touch of the past makes itself felt in his poetry, and he remembers again the fancies of his youth. Better had he passed away his life in ignoble ease, wandering by the banks of the brook, catching the soft spring air in the leaves, loving and being loved in simple fashion. The world is hard upon my poets. Some starve; some turn their genius to basest ends; some let their genial fire degenerate to a feeble spark;

some minister to the vanity and some to the passions of men ; some debase the power of song to party purposes ; some—but a very few—single-hearted and true, roam in the woodlands, and sing of love and charity. But alas ! since my poor Hood died, I have had no poet.”

“ They believe in us no more,” said the King. “ We were associated with things beautiful, things weird, things kindly ; but all things pass away, and we with them.”

“ After all,” said Puck, “ it would be very unpleasant for us to stay here, even if they did believe in us. The smoke of the factories poison us ; there are hardly any forests where we can lurk ; no rivers but are foul with refuse ; hardly any commons but are enclosed by the Lord of the Manor. They’ve stolen great slices of Epping Forest, and wanted to build over Hampstead Heath ; and on the sea-shore are the Coast-guard.”

“ It is the worse for them,” said Oberon.

“Woe to those whom the fairies love not ! We go where Orion’s belt is only dimly visible, rising in the north : there we may find comfort. Their hearts will only grow harder when we have left the land. Knowledge will come without Wisdom, Riches without Content, Power without Greatness, and everything without Love.”

“It will be the worse for the children,” said Titania. “They will lose all the pretty legends which made life a romance to them. Why should they learn hard things ? Why should they be taught the lesson of utility, in this iron age, so soon ? Why should they not, like the brave men of old, be taught to cherish the memories of the good people ? They are little chemists now, and little philosophers ; little linguists, little scorers and scoffers at what they cannot understand.”

“I showed myself to one but yesterday,” said Ariel. “He had been reading ‘The Tempest’—a bright little boy of twelve,

but that his eyes were already short-sighted; and he wore spectacles. Also his face was pale with recent study. I thought I had one believer yet. But, no—he looked at me with wondering eyes, as I floated before him; and then, with sudden vehemence, he exclaimed, ‘Dyspepsia!’ I vanished in disgust. He went home, and told his father—

“‘I’ve just had a curious spectral illusion, produced by cerebral excitement, I suspect, unless the liver is out of sorts. I saw Miss Henrietta Hodson as Ariel, floating above me. Give me the ingredients, father—I had better take a blue pill.’

“‘You want a week’s holiday, and play,’ said his father.

“‘Nonsense, sir,’ returned the boy. ‘But then you cannot be expected to understand these things. Play, indeed! I shall go to the gymnasium for a quarter of an hour longer every day till the examination is over.’

“After all,” continued Ariel, “he was not reading ‘The Tempest’ for pleasure. He was cramming it for a competitive examination. See, he dropped a paper. Here it is :—

“STUFFINGHAM COLLEGE. — An Examination will be held on December 24th, and the six following days, excepting Christmas Day, for a scholarship, value £50 a year, tenable for four years, open to boys under the age of thirteen, in the following subjects :—

Greek.

The Prometheus Vincetus.

Latin.

Lucretius and his Philosophy.

Geography.

The Isle of Wight.

Mathematics.

Algebra, as far as Probabilities.

The Theory of Long Waves.

The Calculus of Finite Differences.

Physiology.

The Structure of the Cranium.

The Antistaltic Action.

Philosophy.

The Correlation of Mind and Matter.

Spinoza and his School.

The Church Catechism.

History.

Universal, with Dates.

Contemporary History.

The Debates of the London School Board.

Languages.

Finnic, Wallachian, and the Ancient Cornish.

Any two may be taken up. The answers must be in French and German, in alternate lines.

Spelling—To Words of Four Syllables.

Latin Verses.

The Four Elementary Rules of
Arithmetic.

Shakspeare—‘The Tempest.’”

Oberon sprang to his feet, and interrupted the reading.

“One act of justice we will do before we go, Puck. Be it thy business to visit this schoolmaster, and to torment him in his dreams. Use all thy ingenuity, my Puck. Torture him, and weigh upon his conscience with a terrible nightmare. He will say that something has disagreed with him. Never mind—make him remember this night. And by my magic art, I command that all this wielder of the rod of Busby feels be presented before us. Hasten, Puck—thou hast but half an hour. Fly!”

A moment's pause, and Ariel sang again—

“Roll Time untiring, roll the ages by,
Through faith of man, not thine, we live or die :
By want of faith we die and pass away.

“We drop, by unfaith, out of human heart :
From poet's brain and children's tales we part :
Our memories fade, we die and pass away.

“ They move the world whose hearts the fairies moved ;
The world loves those whom once the fairies loved :
They live, although we die and pass away.

“ Roll on the years, stern Time that resteth not ;
By unfaith lost, but yet not quite forgot :
We live for ever, though we pass away.”

CHAPTER VII.

“Oh, see how early and before her time
The envious morning up doth climb,
Though she not lose her bed ;
Lest, taken with the brightness of the night,
The world should with it last, and never miss the light.”

BEN JONSON.

IT was a bedroom, simply furnished. On the bed lay a man of middle age, with dogged lips and stern chin. On the pillow Puck whispering in his ears, whilst he tossed restlessly to and fro in his sleep. Then the bedroom seemed to sink and disappear, and the man, instead of lying in a feverish sleep on the bed, was standing in a vast and brilliantly lighted hall, dressed and spectacted. He looked round him. It was like some

dream of Doré's. A network of pillars and arches mounted higher and higher, till they lost themselves in the lofty roof, where a wilderness of carved woodwork arched the expanse in bold, inextricable intricacy. Gorgeous coloured glass, such as our artificers no longer make, adorned the windows. They were painted with legends and scenes from Chaucer and Boccaccio. At the end, on the daïs, stood a throne, whereon sat one aged and venerable, clothed in a mystic robe, grave and majestic. Round him, and scattered about the hall, were figures and forms of every shape, and time, and fashion: the sturdy Trojan and the lusty Greek; the stern old Roman and the courtly Elizabethan gallant; the clown and the king, the lady and the beggar; the burly mechanic and the scented courtier; the soldier and the braggart; the queen and the country wench; the maiden and the martyr. They were conversing and singing—even fighting. They

played with the daggers of their wit. One would lament his fate, another rejoice. There was no likeness between them. One king was unlike another king, one clown unlike another clown ; nor did one lover sigh like another.

Wondering and amazed, the schoolmaster stared around him. The faces looked strange, and yet familiar. He knew the tones of their voices, the fashion of their dresses. He knew the features of the ladies—the goodliest company that ever was gathered together. But yet, for awhile, he wondered who they were. Then suddenly there flashed across his mind the name of Shakspeare ; and he knew that he was in Shakspeare's Hall, and that the airy fabric in which he stood was peopled by Shakspeare's own creations. The crowned sage in the purple robe was none other than Prospero. Yonder Romans were Coriolanus and Anthony. There were Dogberry and Bully Bottom ; there Sir John

Falstaff with Poins, Bardolph, and Master Nym. Viola, Rosalind, Imogen, Beatrice, and fair Miranda were there, in beauty varying as the shades of evening. There Jessica sat with Lorenzo; Romeo here held in his arms the tender Juliet; bluff King Harry led Anne Boleyn by the hand; Cleopatra paraded her beauty to a wondering world. Othello rolled his jealous eyes; King Richard fondled his nephews with crocodile's tears; King Lear was followed by his three daughters, and his regal attendance of knights; Julius Cæsar strode proudly across the stage; Cressida made a thousand promises to Troilus; Malvolio strutted with yellow gaiters; Petruchio made strange love to Katharina; the melancholy Jaques sat apart and mused; and the host of figures, as thick as motes in a sunbeam, crossed his eyes, playing their parts for ever, as the great magician had bidden them.

He stood in the midst, with a vague fear;

for all the faces, as they passed, scowled upon him. And when the deep voice of Prospero commanded that they should bring the mortal before him, his knees shook beneath him—he knew not why; for he was unconscious of any evil wrought or intended against Shakspeare. Four fellows, of fantastic garb and uncouth appearance, seized him, and roughly haled him before the throne.

“Spirits of the Poet’s brain,” said Prospero, “we have here a mortal who is charged with degrading and debasing us.”

There was an angry growl; because, now, all the spirits in the hall were gathered in a ring. The poor schoolmaster looked round upon a sea of angry faces, and quailed.

“Most noble Prospero,” he said, “I am innocent of debasing and degrading the creations of Shakspeare’s brain. Let evidence be called.”

“No evidence—no evidence!” “Tear him to pieces!” shouted the mob.

One voice alone pleaded for the offender.
It was Cranmer.

"My Lord Prospero," he said, "it is incumbent upon us to treat the cloth with respect. Let this reverend gentleman, who is, I dare vouch, of otherwise blameless life, be fairly tried, and stand upon his truth and honesty. I was so tried myself, before King Henry's courtiers. So would I try all—even the clergy of St. Albans, who blacken my name."

"Mortal," said Prospero, "how art thou called?"

"My name," said the schoolmaster, "is Mr. Newlights. I am head master of Stuffingham College, whilom Senior Classic."

"Ay, ay—stick to the point, man—never mind your foolish degree," said Prospero. "Knowledge cannot be proved by examination, nor can wisdom be tested in the schools."

"I am descended from a long line of

schoolmasters," he went on. "I am grandson of old Bishop Sterntickle, whose Latin verse book still forms our manual. I am son-in-law of the great Doctor Inutile Lignum, who wrote the famous treatise on the Digamma, which, of course, you all know too well for me to linger over it. I am——"

"Cease your prabbles," said a voice from the crowd, which I recognized as that of Sir Hugh Evans himself. "My Lord Prospero, make him come to the point."

"Silence in the court!" called an usher, whom I remembered from the "Merchant of Venice"—"silence, or we clear the court!"

"Mr. Newlights," said Prospero, "thy new light is but a sorry reflection of the old. Better hadst thou stuck to the ways of Bishop Sterntickle, or even Dr. Inutile Lignum. You are accused, again, of debasing us—us, the great and immortal—by making us the text-books of boys, the subjects for scholarship examinations. It is pleaded in

the bill of indictment, drawn up by no less a person than Portia herself, that the effect of this new thing cannot but have a most pernicious and evil influence upon the character of the boys themselves, and their feelings as regards us. In the old days Shakspeare came to a boy, as soon as he could understand him, like a new world. He brought to us the freshness of his early imagination; he looked on us as a relief from work; we were his recreation and his joy. What things were not good and useful for him to understand, no one explained to him; what things were good and useful, his instinct picked out. Only the noblest and the best came to us: the worst, the ignoble herd, had no thought for us, nor we of them. Thou art accused of degrading the fancies of our Shakspeare, by making them the commonplace lesson-books of schools; by subjecting our thoughts and immortal words to the rough handling of ignorant boys. Thou art further charged

with corrupting the fountain of history, and trampling underfoot the delicate flowers of fancy. What hast thou to say ? ”

“ Truly, shepherd,” said Touchstone, nodding his head vindictively, “ thou art in a parlous state ! ”

“ Yea, marry,” said Dogberry, with dignity. “ Nevertheless, we will not refuse thy indications. Gossip Verges and I will hear thy condemnation, most notorious benefactor. Speak, thou, in thine own offence.”

“ Most noble Prospero, ladies fair, and gallant gentlemen,” began the culprit—“ hear me before you judge. In the first place, I do but as you did.”

“ How, villain ? ” cried Hotspur, half drawing his sword, and starting forward—“ how mean you ? Was I, Harry Hotspur, a schoolmaster ? ”

“ Peace your lordship’s noble tattlings,” said Sir Hugh Evans ; “ you are a very simplicity shentleman. Let the varlet speak. I will smite his noddles.”

"I do but as you were done by. Pray, what did you learn in your youth?"

"I learned to tilt and tourney," said Hotspur.

"I learned to keep my hands from stealing and my tongue from evil speaking," said Launcelot Gobbo.

"And I to make and mend," said Bottom.

"I learned the art of war and manly exercises," said Julius Cæsar.

"Is there no one here," cried the poor man, "who was properly taught — who learned things useful?"

"What are things useful?" asked Prospero.

"Latin verses chiefly," replied the instructor of youth.

"What are they useful for?"

"They cultivate the mind: they—they develop the taste; they strengthen the intellect."

"How long does your education last?"

"Till twenty-three."

"And what can your pupil do then?"

"Nothing—that is, he can make Latin verses."

"And he says that he trains boys as we were trained!" growled Hamlet.

"This is evasion. Come to the charge."

"It is true," replied the accused, "that modifications of the old plan have been introduced. The boys are taught things of practical utility. They can describe the structure of the body."

"Can they ride?" asked Hotspur.

"They can make horrible smells in a laboratory."

"Can they fight?" asked Harry the Fifth.

"We discourage fighting. Boys in my school never fight. They contend amicably in athletic sports; but they funk each other's fists."

"That's a pretty state of things for England to have come to!" said Henry the Eighth. "Not fight! Why, what in the

world—oh! Lord Prospero, I would hang this man!”

“But to the charge—speak to the charge!” said the judge.

“Did no one read Homer?” asked the schoolmaster.

There was a dead silence. No one in the hall had read Homer.

“Did no one read Virgil?”

Two or three nodded their heads; but cautiously, as if to imply that their acquaintance with Virgil was limited.

“Then,” he said, “I do but as you; because my boys learn Shakspeare, even as you were taught at school Virgil, Ovid, or the Latin grammar.”

There was a furious and common yell. One stepped forward.

“My lord, this man deserves condign punishment. One speaker will do as well as another, for all have been at school. I am Bassanio, sir schoolmaster. Well I remember

how we sat, grammar in hand, beneath the ferule of an angry pedant. For every slip of tongue or pen, for every slight mistake, there was but one punishment—the rod. Day by day were we beaten and ill-treated. The memory of that time made us hate the sight of a book or a written page. Even yet, at the name of Ovid, we move uneasily upon the chair. There was no mercy, no kindness, no leading by love. We were driven as cattle along the road of learning—only with this difference, that only the stray cattle are beaten back to their places, and we received all alike the same impartiality of flogging. My lord judge, I speak in the name of this most august assemblage. He is convicted by his own mouth. He blasphemes our Shakspeare, because he makes him an instrument for the torture of boys.”

“We flog them no longer,” cried poor Mr. Newlights. “Schools are not what they were.”

"He prates lies," said Sir Hugh. "You cannot teach boys without the ferule. I never could. No boys ever were better taught the rudiments than mine. Sir Newlights, do not lie!"

"Let me torment him, good master," cried Caliban, reaching forward and clutching the wretch in his long and hideous arms. "Let Caliban pinch him, and beat him, and bite him, and turn him into strange stuff."

"Take him, all of you, and work your will upon him," said the judge.

I saw that the most gentle ladies and the most noble lords joined in the torture. They chased him round the hall with hounds of Crete; they lashed him with scourges from the Gaol of Vienna, brought by Abhorson himself; they put him into a buck basket, filled with linen for the wash, and tossed him out into the river; they pinched and pricked him under the oak of Herne the Hunter; they brought him to woo Katharina, who

beat him over the head with a three-legged stool ; they mocked him with a banquet of warm water ; they cut pounds] of flesh from him without blood ; they made him fight with Tybalt ; they drove him out, followed by King Lear's Fool, on the coldest winter night.

Tired with their own revenge, they brought back their victim, pale, worn, and haggard, to the judge.

"Have mercy !" he groaned — "have mercy !"

"Let him go," said Achilles ; "he has had enough. As for Homer, I say nothing ; but see how Shakspeare has treated me."

"Unbind his arms," said Prospero. "Tell me now, thou presumptuous knave, what dost thou learn from me and mine?"

"I learn to reverence wisdom and mercy. I learn how truest love and deepest purity go together, and are brother and sister."

"Lessons for manhood, not for boys.

What have they to do with love? Teach them only that shame and remorse follow after evil-doing. Children have nought to do with villainy."

"What dost learn from me?" asked Othello.

"The folly of idle jealousy—the danger of a suspicious temper. Another lesson in womanly purity."

"Shakspeare is full of such," said the Moor; "but what have children to do with jealousy?"

He spoke not.

"What may one learn from me?" asked Jaques.

"Many things—such as that happiness belongs not to wealth; that man is but a puppet of circumstances, and hence that our best wisdom is little better than the motley talk of fools; that pride and passion make slaves of us; that——"

"Rightly hast thou studied me," replied

Jaques, with some pride. "That foolish Duke! Pardon me, your Grace—I knew not you stood so near."

"'Tis well answered," said the judge; "but is this a lesson for boys?"

"Ay, forsooth," interposed Dogberry, "answer me that, most well-favoured and disartful vagrom man. He is but an aspicious person, good sirs—an aspicious person."

"'Tis thin drink—thin drink, and too little of that, hath made him what he is," said Sir John Falstaff. "Let him have a cup of sherris sack. Pray, sir schoolmaster, what has your reverence learned from me—from poor old Jack?"

Mr. Newlights looked but said nothing.

"I am a fit companion for beardless youth, am I not?" continued the knight. "Pah! sir. Learn that Shakspeare was a roistering blade, and wrote for men."

"Silence!" said the judge. "Are the

things you have named for boys and girls? Are the children to be made philosophers and cynics before the very days of school are over? Is the best blossom of youth, its trust and faith, to be gathered and thrown away before it is half blown out?"

"Canst thou learn aught from me?" asked Hamlet, who wore light hair, and had blue eyes, as becomes a Scandinavian prince.

The poor man looked puzzled.

"Many men say many things of thee, fair prince. Schlegel——"

"Pshaw! Prate not to me of Schlegel. I ask for thine opinions. Tell me—what am I?"

"Truly, I know not."

"And thou thinkest that children will? Why, noble sirs, here is a rascally knave for you, who flogs the boys because they cannot understand better than himself! Here is a man for you! Go to. Come with me, Ophelia."

Newlights was proceeding to explain again his brand-new system, by which the boys are made to flog each other, and taught to believe that it is a noble and elevating work, when he was pulled aside by an impudent-faced rogue, dressed in a suit of many colours.

“Look here, prisoner mine—knowest thou me? I am Autolycus—ha! ha!—knowest thou me?”

“I do. Thou art a knave.”

“Right, right. How pat he hath it! A knave—ha! ha!—a graceless varlet: one who cheats country bumpkins, and picks young maidens’ pockets; one who lives by lies and thefts, and sometimes gets whipped at the cart-tail. A good lesson for boys! Here is a better. Here is Judge Angelo—nay, never blush, my lord—he is good reading for children, is he not?”

“Peace, peace, sirrah!” said a gentle voice beside him. “Let King Lear speak.”

The King was leaning on Cordelia's arm. "From me," he said, "you may teach the boys, an you will, that age is sometimes fond and foolish, liable to be blinded by flattery ; also that old kings are not so wise as their white hair and venerable appearance would betoken. So, too, you may teach them that women may be cruel, daughters unnatural ; that falsehood and ingratitude abound in the world, even where we should least look to find them. 'Tis a lesson for age. Let experience bring it ; let the children believe that authority is always venerable ; let them not know that age is sometimes fond and foolish. Take me away, Cordelia."

"Much may be said about us," said the Merry Wives of Windsor ; "but is it children's lore ?"

"And learned from me," said Touchstone, "if only they understood the ways of the Court."

"And about me," said Parolles. "The

conversation of a brave man and a soldier is——”

“Tush!” said the judge, “we waste words. Let him go. Caliban, chase him out.”

Oberon raised his hand, and all vanished together. Puck was in his place, and in the east a grey streak showed that another day was about to dawn.

“Enough,” said the King, “enough, good Robin. Well hast thou done. See, yonder glows the red dawn. Fairies, we stay no more. Titania, take your last look at an English sunrise. The last night is gone.”

“The last night,” echoed the elves, weeping.

The lights were paling fast, the stars were hiding their heads, the gray glimmer in the east grew brighter every moment.

“Sing, Ariel, our farewell song.”

While he sang the Farewell of the Fairies

the music grew fainter and fainter, and with it his voice, till the last word was hardly audible at all :—

“ Farewell, farewell ! we pass away
From lawn, and field, and fountain ;
And never more our feet may stray
On lowland or by mountain.
We fly from hedge and holly bush,
We part from wood and meadow ;
We hide no more by fern or rush,
Nor lurk in evening shadow.

“ Farewell, farewell ! yet evermore,
Where'er our sports and dances,
The land we loved so well of yore
Will live in fairies' fancies.
Though childish days of fear be passed,
And simple days be perished,
Yet tender thought of us shall last
While tender thought is cherished.

“ Farewell, farewell ! we part, we part !
Ah ! days we leave behind us—
Yet kindness, and simple heart,
And love may ever find us.
By coral reef, by purple strand,
In Southern islet banished,
Our hearts will yearn for thee, dear land,
And loved ones long since vanished.

“Farewell ! if aught of fairy song
In man’s remembrance linger ;
If thought of us should wake the tongue
Once more of woodland singer ;
And if amid your noisy talk
You yet remember clearly,
Think kindly of the little folk
Who loved your kin so dearly.

“Come, Spring, with white May-blossom crowned,
And scatter cowslips over ;
Spread all the hedge with roses round,
And all the fields with clover.
Shine on, shine on, thou summer moon,
Shine over wood and river :
Oh ! land so fair, we part too soon—
But, ah ! we part for ever.”

CHAPTER VIII.

“ By tarn and rill
The night birds all that hour were still :
But now they are jubilant anew.”

Christabel.

EVERY light went out—the music stopped—the elves, with a last cry, disappeared : Puck last. Only Oberon and Titania were left. They stooped over me where I lay.

“ We go,” they said. “ Tell the people of England—tell them that we come no more till England be merry England again, and they return to their good old belief ; when the School Boards have done their work, and, under the belief they were educating, have only taught a bundle of facts. Such

confusion and destruction of everything thought stable will happen, that you will be glad to return to your old ways again. Then, perhaps, the village sports will go on as of yore, and the tales be told again round the blazing fire ; and the dreams of equality, universal acquirements, socialism, and anarchy will be all gone away, like sick fancies of a fevered brain."

"When will that be, great King and Queen?" I asked.

"We know not—we never know anything but what is and what has been. We remember nothing painful : we have no sorrow, so we can have no prescience. It is only he who has suffered that can foretell the future."

"Would that I had your Majesties' permission to set forth to the world, with what little art I know, humble as it is, the vision of this night."

"Our splendour," said the Queen, "is not

to be painted or drawn ; nevertheless, the intention is good. Having seen us, you at least will believe us. Do not DARE, sir, to wake up to-morrow morning, and say it was all a dream."

"I will not," I protested fervently.

"Forget not that you are the only living man who has ever seen us. And in token of our kindness and good favour towards you, I leave you my globe—see, it is within reach of your hand—and my sceptre."

"And I," said Oberon, "my golden crown."

They laid down the glittering baubles, and disappeared.

"One Quarter—Gone is night ;
Two Quarters—Hear my call ;
Three Quarters—Now comes light ;
Four Quarters—Wake ye all."

And then, with slow and solemn sound, as if it were the knell of night, the clock struck One—Two—Three !

I started to my feet, and looked around. It was broad daylight. The red dawn was glowing brightly in the east, and the day was really come. From the branches of the trees in the forest came a confused twitter of the waking birds, and in the air already a murmur of waking insects. Day was here, and life, and light.

What of the night ?

The lamps that hung upon the trees were turned into the white May-blossom ; the throne had become a wild rose-bush ; the canopy a hanging honeysuckle ; and the globe and sceptre were an acorn and a reed. I rubbed my eyes and looked again. Yes, like all fairies' gifts, what was gold by night, and in their hands, had become a mere worthless thing of the woods in the daylight. Strange confirmation of the reality of what I had seen ! So, also, my faith was strengthened by finding that King Oberon's crown was turned into a handful of primroses and

cowslips ; and my memory, so wayward in the tricks of the brain, tried to persuade me that I had gathered them myself the day before. While—could I believe my own eyes ?—Queen Mab's CHARIOT, the very chariot she had ridden in the night before, just as I had seen it, was transformed, without losing its shape, into a dry and yellow leaf ! Beside it her wand, changed into a twig of ivy. There was the fairy ring, and there were the marks of their little feet. Only I missed the music that floated from the bushes, and the bubbling murmur of their laughter. But, surely, it was something to find proofs, clear and not to be impugned, of the truth of the statement I felt bound to make, and which I have made.

You still have doubts, dear reader ? Be not ashamed : it is an incredulous age, as has been said before. Come, however, and see my trophies—the acorn, the withered flowers, the dry leaf, the reed, the ivy twig. I have

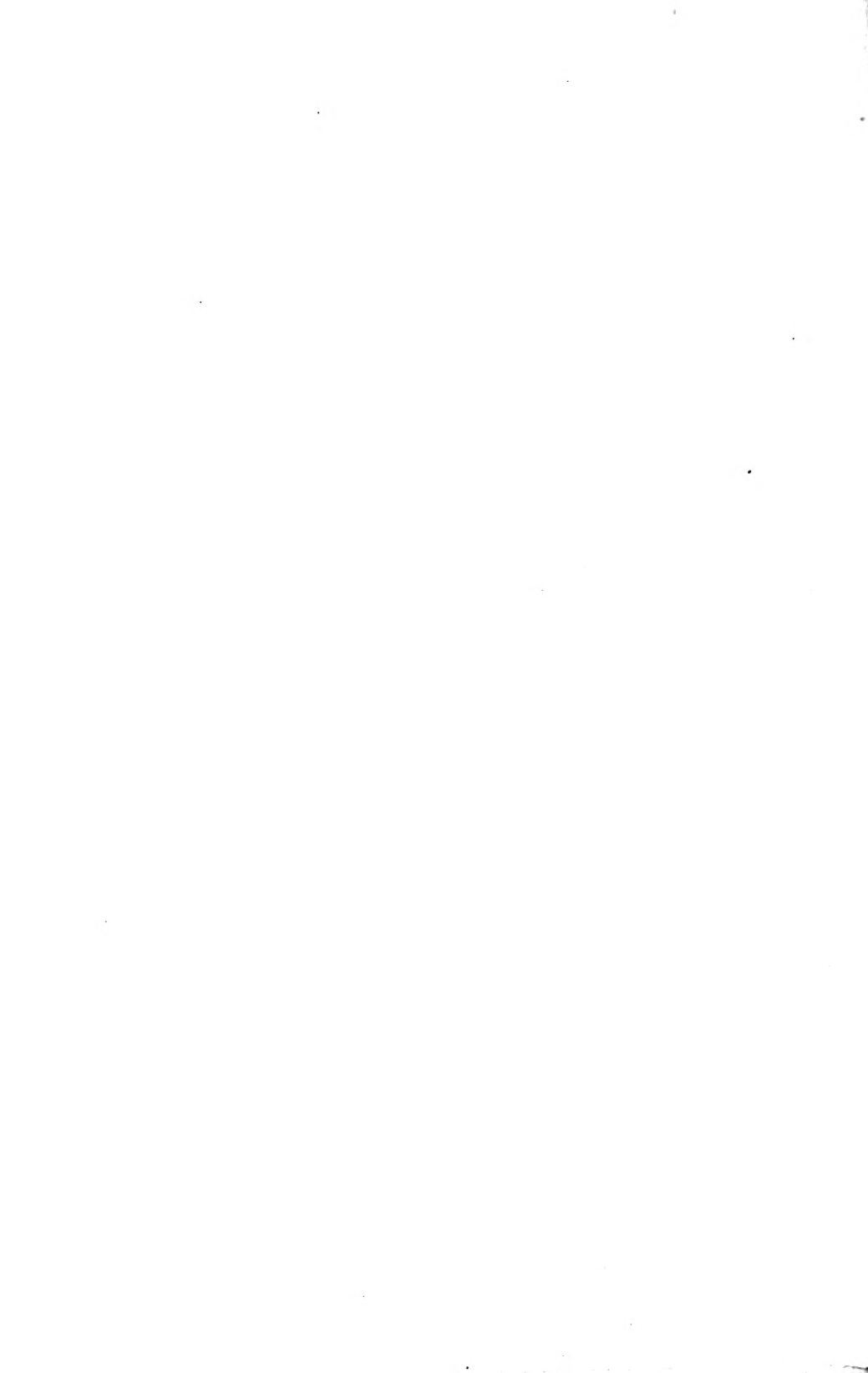
brought them all away. I have had a photograph taken of the old oak. I keep them sacredly, and shall hand them down as an heirloom to my nearest and dearest. Meantime, they are used to confound the scoffer. Come and see them under their glass case. The acorn, as an acorn, is simple in shape, and hardly distinguishable from any other acorn ; the dry leaf, as a dry leaf, has little remarkable in its appearance ; the other things, were it not for sacred associations, might be passed over in absolute silence. And, really, this is the most remarkable circumstance of all.

Going home through the dewy fields, I recalled the words of the good people, and their songs and dances. The woods and meadows were fresh with life and vigour, rejoicing in the light of day and the warmth of the rising sun ; the lark, high above my head, carolled a roundelay of love and pride to his partner in the nest below ; the stock

dove cooed his soft love in the wood ; and the flowers opened their tender petals. All was bright and fresh—even the smoke that went up from the little town to which I was returning.

“ Not altogether vain,” I thought, “ was the cult of the fairies—not a superstition that brought evil with it—a relic of Paganism touched with the light of the new religion, something to help us sometimes to shake off reality, and live in the ideal.

“ Reality ! Ideal ! Why, which is which ? The old nature-worship goes on as ever. Great god Pan never dies. What I have seen to-night was seen through that sixth sense—the love of the beautiful—which is the Blessing added to the Curse, for it sanctifies toil ; and when we are weary with the world and its troubles, it helps to take us away to that land where everything is fair, and no one is weary.”



PART III.
FROM FACT.



ON THE GOODWIN.



IT was a wild night in October. The time, ten by the clock, if you could hear it striking. Outside, a gale blowing hard from the south-east, and rain that blew against the face like small shot. Inside, my father just recovered from an attack of the gout, and more than usually genial and communicative; my mother at work on some trifle for the expected niece or nephew—in our family of eight married girls, there was at least one new arrival daily expected—and myself, reading a novel.

Presently, the tumult of the weather out-

side grew greater than I could well bear; and I threw down the book, and started up.

“Not going out in a night like this, Harry?” said my mother.

“Only to look at the weather. As far as the pier. I shall be back in half an hour.”

I changed my evening dress for a rough suit, put on a veritable tarpaulin, lit a cigar—which the wind reduced to ashes in three minutes—and sallied forth.

We were staying at Deal, where my father had taken a house for a few months. It was one of those houses, which the reader doubtless remembers, which lie north of the quaint old town, between Deal and Sandown Castle—that curious old ruin, which looks like some old wedding-cake pressed down and out of shape by a heavy hand, or like a Strasbourg pie which had been unlawfully sliced away longitudinally. They are new houses, facing the sea, and close to the shingly beach, off which I used to bathe in early morning,

despite the prohibition of the authorities. We had been leading a lazy, shrimp-eating sort of a life for three months. I had nothing to do but to go on deluding myself into the belief that I was perfectly qualified to undertake certain responsibilities about to be conferred upon me in the Michaelmas term by the authorities of Lincoln's Inn. I dallied in the morning with law books till they bored me. Then I lit a pipe, and strolled over to Sandwich or to Walmer, where I made certain acquaintances with the Engineers, and watched scientific experiments. In the evening, we all three dined together, and so to bed—a truly innocent, Arcadian style of life. Only I was a little bored with it, and beginning to feel that the commencement of term and London would perhaps bring just a little more variety into one's daily existence. The old general, my father, had only two moods: that of excessive irascibility when the gout seized his toe—

then we let him say all he pleased, praying silently that the fit might be a short one—and excessive geniality, when the good old fellow would roar with laughing as we mimicked one of his rages and inconsequential fits of unreasoning wrath while the gout was upon him. However, it was a great comfort for him to have me with him, greater still when I brought some fellows from Dover and Walmer to dinner; and so I stayed on.

I had heard—who has not?—of the Deal boatmen, their pluck, their greediness over salvage, their recklessness of life; but somehow they had evaded my search. I never seemed able to find a genuine boatman. It is true that the weather was too fine for the work of lifeboats, but surely they sometimes took exercise. As for identifying the shabby-looking men who lounged disconsolately along the beach with the Deal boatmen, I never for a moment thought of it. Sometimes I went deep-sea fishing, but not

often ; for, if the truth must be told, the motion of the boat went far to counteract any pleasure I felt in hauling up the mackerel. Sometimes I lounged on the pier, when divers beauties of a semi-London type—that is, with seaside uniforms and London chignons and hats—disported their charms in the sea breeze, and gathered fresh bloom for the social festivities of that beloved Bloomsbury of which they were the pride and the ornament. Dear little unsophisticated girls ! How often have these eyes marked you, as you saw my manly form advancing down the pier, my leg thrust out like an old Knave of Spades, my glass in my eye—really, I cannot see without it—and exhibiting in my every attitude that readiness to introduce myself on the slightest encouragement, and to converse with unprotected beauty, which is the attribute of every Briton. As I claimed to call myself a gentleman, and the damsels were ladies, I refrained from demonstrating openly my

desires, and they held out no signs of a corresponding readiness to fall in with my views. A verbose passage this; but the girls were really pretty and nice, and I should have liked to talk with some of them.

All this preamble is quite beyond my story, melancholy and tragic as it is; and I am almost ashamed to let it stand. But it shows in what mood of mind I was on that night when I sallied forth, during the great storm of 1867, a little more than five years ago, to fight with the hurricane on the beach of Deal, little thinking what consequences were to follow to me and mine.

A night of hurricane and storm: a night on which a strong man like myself, of five and twenty, found it difficult to keep on his legs as the wind came sweeping across: a night when the wild spray dashed up the shingle against the windows of the Royal Hotel, and over the houses which still stand with their discourteous backs turned to the

grand old ocean. I struggled onwards, and reached the pier. No admittance there. The gates were locked and the men gone. I clambered over, but soon came back, because the wind was strong enough to blow me away like a piece of paper, and I got tired of holding on by the railing, like clinging to the davits of a ship. I held on by the club house, passed along the lee of the houses on the Walmer road, and presently came to the lifeboat house, where a small crowd was gathered together, which I joined.

An animated discussion was going on, and the boat lay ready to be launched in the little house, which looks like a chapel. If a chapel is a haven of safety, surely no better shape could be devised for the guardianship of a lifeboat.

I soon caught the subject of their talk. A ship—was it a ship, or a lugger, or a Boulogne potato craft? what was it?—was on the Goodwin Sands.

They were preparing, in all thoughtfulness—for messengers of life and death must needs go well prepared—to put out to her assistance. No question, theirs, of the salvage. For all they cared, it might be the potato craft, or it might be a big ship. In the furious storm and darkness, all they could see was a single light, stationary, where no light ought to be stationary. Low tide, but the tide was rising every moment. So the needful operations, quick, but not hastened, went on ; and all was ready.

All but one thing—the men. The captain, or coxswain, or whatever his legitimate title, looked round, and asked quickly—

“Where’s Tom?”

Where was Tom, indeed!

No answer. At last a small boy raised his voice and suggested that he was gone to Sandwich. The coxswain muttered what sounded more like an oath than a prayer, and looked round in perplexity. I fancied his

eye rested for a moment on me. Forgetful of my promise to return in half an hour, I stepped forward, and clapped the man on the shoulder.

“Take me,” I said, “I can row—I have rowed in a dozen races. I am strong enough, and in pretty good training.”

He looked at me curiously, and shook his head.

“Too dangerous, young gentleman. Mayhap you’ll lie down in the boat and cry, when we want every one to have his wits about him.”

“No,” I said, “I shall not cry, at any rate. Take me, and you’ll not repent it.”

He passed his hand up my arm, feeling the muscle with a sort of grim approbation. Then he conferred a minute or two with his crew. Then he turned to me, and said, gruffly—

“Come this way, sir.”

I followed, and was speedily rigged out

in a suit of rough flannels belonging to the truant Tom.

“You may go, and if you get drowned, of course it bean’t our fault. You’ll do your best in the boat, I’m sure ; and if anything comes of the venture—why, it’ll be Tom’s, I suppose.”

I agreed, of course, and we came back.

I do not know to this day how we got launched. In a wild, surging whirlpool of foam, wave, and wind, that blinded my eyes and nearly washed me off my seat, I found the boat fairly off the shore, and was warned by the man nearest me, in a practical method—that is, by a pretty tough “punch” in the shoulders—to keep my wits about me. My thoughts, for the first ten minutes or so, were how to keep my hands tight to the oar, and hold it and myself in some kind of correspondence. Presently, I found that some sort of order could be observed in the waves, and some sort of regularity in the wind : that it

always blew a gale, but sometimes it blew worse and sometimes worst. No one spoke —for that matter, no one would have been heard, if he had been singing. How long did it last? I have not the faintest conception of time over the whole business. Looking back at it now, I seem to have lost all count of time. It seemed that my rowing had lasted an eternity; as if I had been always rowing; as if life never had been, in reality, anything, and never could be anything again but sitting in a lifeboat, doing one's best to keep one's wits about one, to do one's duty, and to row without shirking. Every now and then, I felt a sort of vague wonder as to whether I should ever get back again; but, in the midst of those wild and furious waves, the sensation of battle was too strong to admit of fear. I may safely say that I was not afraid; and yet the storm was worse, I heard afterwards, than anything the boatmen had ever experienced before. There

came a time more terrible than any we had had before, for we drew near to the wretched craft that had gone upon the sands. And now my pen fails me. I cannot describe the brief five minutes we spent alongside the vessel we had come to help. I could see nothing but a whirling crest of wave and foam breaking over her. I grew wild with excitement. I tried to keep myself calm and collected, but in vain. I only know that, in what seemed a moment, we were away from her again, with bows pointed to the shore ; and that at the feet of the coxswain lay a woman's form, crouched in a heap, senseless, inanimate. The sailors on board, I learned afterwards, had just time to sling the woman on board us, when a wave, greater and more furious than any of the rest, took the boat amidships—she was only a little craft, of thirty tons or so, laden with eggs and potatoes from Boulogne or Calais—and washed the little crew of half a dozen overboard together.

More battling with the spirits of the storm; but this time we had the woman with us—one life at least saved; and if ever men pulled with a will, we did on that fearful night.

Thank God!—the beach. Fifty stout hands to drag us up the shingle. Fifty men to help us out of the boat. Proffers of brandy enough to make a Dutchman drunk. And in the boat-house, my old governor himself, trying not to look affected. He seized my hand first—for there was a lot of hand-shaking going on.

“Bravely done, my boy!” he said. “I’m proud of you! And now make haste home, for your mother is anxious.”

“Stay a moment, sir. Let us first look after our passenger.”

They were lifting her out, and were touching her closed lips with brandy. She was still senseless. Young, with straight and regular features, long black hair that hung

dank and dripping upon her shoulders, eye-lashes that fringed her closed eyes and lay upon her cold cheek. Dressed in some sort of silk, with one ring on her finger—not a wedding-ring—her bonnet had been blown away, with her shawls or wrappers, and a sailor's jacket was thrown over her shoulders by one of the rough bystanders.

In a few moments she opened her eyes.

“Ah ! mon Dieu ! mon Dieu !” she murmured.

“She is a Frenchwoman,” I said to my father. “What is to be done with her ?”

“Done with her !—done with her ! Take her home with us, and look after her, of course. What should be done with her ? Here, my lads, bustle about ! Get a cart, or a carriage, or something. Bring her along, and fetch a doctor.”

The General gave his orders in his usual quick, abrupt fashion ; and presently a little procession was formed, and we marched

through the town with our burden, who was sensible, but passively allowed herself to be carried.

They put her to bed, my mother sitting up with her ; and presently the doctor came.

“ Young lady has had a shock to her nervous system. Little delirious at present, General. Soon get over it. Find out friends. Rejoice their hearts. Congratulate you on the night's work, young man. You're a Deal boatman yourself, now.”

There was nothing in her pockets, but a purse with a little money : no letters ; no name on her clothes, except the initials A. C. ; nothing whatever to mark her identity. And she was delirious.

My mother attended her. The patient's brain was fixed upon one delusion. She thought that people were hunting her ; she saw her persecutors approaching ; she shrieked with terror as they drew nearer ;

she cried to my mother to hide her. And sometimes, when they seemed to have caught her, she would turn her face to the pillow, and moan pitifully, declaring that she had not done it—that it was another—that it was his own fault.

“Great nervous shock,” said the doctor. “Seems a lady. White hands. No work done by them, at any rate. Shall pull her round, General.”

She took time, however, to be pulled round; and it was not till three weeks after her rough landing upon our shore that she came down one morning to breakfast, leaning upon my mother’s arm, dressed in some white stuff, and looking wonderfully beautiful in her pallor and fragility.

“I cannot,” she said, speaking French—
“I cannot thank you sufficiently, M. le General—and you, madame—and you, sir, for all that you have done for me; and the time has come when I ought not only to

thank you and explain myself, but to prepare for my departure."

"No thanks necessary at all," growled my father. "We are not stocks and stones. Tell us only, mademoiselle, if you please, your name and address, that we may write to your friends, and set their minds at ease about you."

"Madame tells me that I have been delirious," she said; "and that in my brain wanderings, I have never spoken of my friends—only of my enemies."

"Always as if you were being hunted down, my poor child," said my mother.

"It is curious, for I have no enemies; on the other hand, I have no friends."

"No friends, mademoiselle? — no relations?" asked my father.

"Only a cousin who is in the army in Algeria, and another who is in the *Infanterie de la Marine* in New Caledonia. Besides these, none. My name, my kind friends—

whom I shall ever think of with love and respect—is Adrienne de Comarmond. My father—now dead, as well as my poor mother—was an officer in the army, a colonel. He left me in charge of his sister, my aunt, Mdlle. de Comarmond. She, too, died six weeks ago, and left me with nothing but a few letters of introduction to people in England, who, she said, would help me to get a situation as governess. To them I was going. But where are the letters? Alas! all is lost—my wardrobe, my letters, my little tokens of recollection, everything.” She stopped, and buried her face in her hands; then went on. “The captain of the little vessel which was wrecked knew my father well. He had been in his regiment years ago. He took me over, the poor man, for nothing. Ah, if I became rich, I would help his widow. And that, madame, is all my story. If you will add to your kindness by telling me of some place, however poor, in London, where a

demoiselle may live for a short time until she gets a place, you will add still more to that deep debt of gratitude which I can never pay—which I would rather not pay.”

“A governess?—well—well—” said my father, uneasily. “Yes, we might find you a place. But what do you say, wife?”

“I say that Mdlle. de Comarmond must stay a little longer with us, and get strong first. We will talk about business afterwards.”

“Ah, madame, you are too kind. See, now, I am very clever. I know English, oh! a little—a very little. But I am quick, I shall soon know it well. I play the piano, I play the harp, I sing, I draw, I paint—oh, I am very clever! I shall make an excellent *institutrice*. But you are too kind, madame.”

So, without more words, mademoiselle stayed with us. She made rapid progress in her English. She had been taught to read, but of course, in her out-of-the-way

convent, had not the most rudimentary idea of speaking, English—her accent being at first something atrocious. But she insisted on our talking as if she understood every word; and in a few weeks grew to comprehend most things, and to express her own ideas with tolerable fluency.

The thing that most struck me about this French girl was her extraordinary fragility of appearance. She seemed to be almost ethereal. Hands of the tiniest—mere child's hands, only the fingers were so thin and long; a wrist which seemed incapable of bearing the slightest burden; and tiny feet—when you came to see them, which was not often, for mademoiselle was jealous of her charms—like Chinese feet for smallness, though not for shape: all her ways, too, gentle and delicate, as if anything rough and uncouth was positively unknown to her. And as she recovered gradually from the long shock of her illness, and her features filled up, we—or at least one,

of us—began to notice her wonderful beauty. It was not the ordinary beauty of a French-woman — that much-maligned creature of incomparable grace, who is accused of having no beauty; nor was it the beauty of an Italian, far less of a German, type. It seemed almost as if on one of the noblest stocks of France had been grafted the gipsy blood. I know not why I thought so, because she was of a perfect whiteness. Her eyes, black and full, had a sort of Eastern limpidness, something like that of the Syrian almond eye; the lashes were long, and she had a trick of half shutting the lids, and lazily looking at things through her drooping lashes. To my mother, who had no companion, the presence of this girl brought an inexpressible and daily increasing source of comfort. For she had the power of divining what ought to be done and what ought to be said. Never for a moment servile, she yet paid her patrons for their kindness with a

thousand little daily acts of attention and consideration. She read to my father ; she went about the house with my mother, and helped her in all sorts of ways ; and in the evening played to us. Ah, heavens ! how she played !—with what passion, with what depth and intensity of emotion, till the keys spoke, and sang their “ *Lieder ohne Worte* ” better than if Swinburne had set verses to them. Or sometimes—but not often, because her singing was not so good as her playing—she sang little French songs, of a light and innocent kind, such things as they teach girls in convents, like the mildest and most harmless champagne. As for the question of her departure, it was put off altogether—postponed *sine die* by tacit consent ; and she became part of ourselves.

It was in the end of November, on one of those late autumn days which belie the evil character given to this month, that as I was strolling back home, after going into the

town, I saw her tripping lightly out of the house, dressed in her usual neat and unpretending style, and looking a hundred times better dressed than half the women one meets in the Park.

“It is you, Monsieur Edward? I am going to post madame’s letters, and to buy some ribbons.”

“Come for a walk with me, instead. I will post the letters for you, and the ribbons will wait.”

She hesitated a moment, and then turned back with me, prattling in her pretty way of all things under heaven and on earth.

We passed on beyond the last houses to the north of Deal, beyond Sandown Castle, and came to the old pathway called the Sand-Hills, which lies between Sandwich and Deal, and is a short cut. This leads away from the beach; and we followed it, in perfect unconcern whither it might take us.

It is a wild, desolate pathway. Scarcely

any one walks along it by day or night. Merely a track, marked by feet of occasional wayfarers. On the right, the mounds of grass-grown sand which have given it its name. Climb over them, and you will see a scene of desolation stretching to the sea, like the Wilderness of Judah, where, mound after mound, the sand-hills rise and fall; on the left, a ditch overgrown with duckweed and marsh mallow, where occasionally you see a water-rat hurrying into his amphibious home somewhere in the banks.

Gradually, the influences of the wild place seemed to sober my companion. She walked in silence, glancing curiously from side to side, and with eyes that seemed looking at something in the far distance, as one who sits and thinks he sees some place miles away, where he has not been for many a year.

I, too, became silent; and we strolled along, saying nothing to each other. Presently, on the edge of the ditch, we came to

a stone which I never remembered to have seen there before. It was the size of an ordinary milestone, square-shaped, and had an inscription on it :—

HERE MARY BAX WAS
MURDERED BY MICHAEL LARK,
SEAMAN AND FOREIGNER,
SEPT. 26, 1767.

HE WAS AFTERWARDS HANGED FOR THE
OFFENCE.

I read it aloud, and shuddered. My companion read it, and turned pale.

“An awful place for a murder,” I said, looking round. “A wild, desolate place—the spot which a murderer would choose. Can we not fancy him bringing his victim out here on that quiet September night, far away from any house, and then deliberately doing her to death? See, he would hide her body in the ditch; then wash his hands, and go away again. How was he found out? Murder is always found out, you know.

But, mademoiselle, in Heaven's name, what is the matter?"

If she was pale before, she was ghastly now. Her lips were white, her brow studded with drops that seemed wrung out in agony; her eyes—those beautiful, limpid eyes—strained with a fearful expression of misery, pain, and expectation; her hands held out before her, palms downward, in an attitude of the most miserable despair.

"Mademoiselle, what is it?"

She fell fainting towards me. I caught her up as she fell, and laid her on the grass. Then, although the water in the ditch looked foul and muddy, it was better than nothing, and I filled my hat with it, and sprinkled her face and forehead. In a moment she recovered and sat upright.

"Ah!" she said, "I suppose I have walked too far. I am not strong, you know. Wait a moment, and I shall be well again."

She turned her head, and read the inscription again.

“Ah, miserable stone!” she said, with a faint smile; “you have frightened me, you and your inscription—and you, Monsieur Edward, who wanted to draw a picture of the horrible murder. Come, let us run away and leave it!”

She walked back with a sort of feverish activity, and talking incessantly; only I fancied she talked too quickly. Evidently, she was not well. I had overtaken her strength. As we reached the house, she said to me, with more emphasis than was necessary for so simple a request—

“Promise me, Monsieur Edward, that you will not say a word to madame about this wretched fainting fit of mine. She is so kind that she will be frightened.”

Of course I promised.

That night she did not come down to dinner, having a headache; and the whole of the next day kept her room.

The following day, I found her sitting in the little room which was my mother's favourite, which looked upon the sea, and was fitted with rose-coloured curtains, her pet colour—and, for the matter of that, Adrienne's too. Did I say that I had got in the habit of thinking of her as Adrienne? Perhaps it was from hearing my mother call her so. The General always called her his "little ally," and used to make little jokes about the *entente cordiale*. But then his generalship, and his acquaintance with the French too, dated back to the Crimean war. He has been spared, poor old man, the agony and humiliation of seeing his old comrades in the field despoiled and conquered—made to sign a treaty more greedy and grasping on the part of the conquerors, more barbarous, more pitiless, than anything since the days of Brennus, while England looked on and said nothing.

She was sitting on the sofa reading, with

the warm rose light falling full upon her face. I never saw her look so lovely. My heart gave a great leap, and my throat seemed to swell and prevent me from speaking as I looked at her.

She raised her eyes and smiled. I could bear it no longer. I was only five and twenty, which is some excuse. I threw myself down at her feet, and seized her hands, crying, in broken tones—

“Adrienne—my own Adrienne, I love you. It is I whose stupid folly made you suffer—my poor fragile, sensitive child. Forgive me, for I love you.”

She let her hands lie in mine for a moment, and then withdrew them gently.

“Forgive you,” she said, “why not? What is there to forgive?”

“But I said more, Adrienne. I said I loved you.”

“In my country, people only say that when they are married.”

“But we are in England now. Ah, dearest, bear with me—hear me plead my own love.”

Did I love her? Even now I cannot answer that question. For five years I have been trying to find out whether I really loved her, or whether it was only the passing fancy of a man for the beauty of a woman, in her case heightened by all the circumstances connected with her—the wreck, the lifeboat, my own share in her rescue, her own fragility of appearance. We may fall in love a hundred times. There is no period between eighteen and eight and forty when there is not a possible wife among our acquaintance. But real love, or what we read of, I do not know. If ever I felt it, it was that moment when I knelt at her feet, while she lay upon the couch, and I longed with all the strength of my soul to fold her in my arms, and feed my hungry heart with kisses.

“Monsieur Edward,” she said, “would it

not be a dishonourable thing for me to listen to you? See, I am a poor girl. I am living here on the bounty of your parents. Nay, go away, be silent—I cannot listen.”

“But if they gave consent—if then, my Adrienne?”

“Alas!” she murmured, “they will not.”

I snatched her hand again and kissed it, and left her.

I went straight to my father, and told him my story. By great good luck, he was that day entirely free from gout. He wagged his head from side to side for five minutes, and then nodded it up and down for five minutes more. This was his way of turning the matter over in all its lights. Then he said he would think over it. That meant he would go by my mother’s decision.

I went to her and pleaded—not in vain; for my mother was more in love with Adrienne than any of us.

“Why not, Edward? She is a Catholic,

I suppose ; but we may get over that in time. She is a lady. She is good. She is accomplished. Really, my son, if I were to choose your wife for you myself, even the jealous eye of your mother could find you no better wife than my dear Adrienne."

Adrienne was a Catholic, but a liberal one ; and the religious difficulty was got over at once, and by half an hour's discussion with my father. I heard them discussing with open doors—that is, I heard my father banging a book on the table, and stating with emphasis and clearness the more evident points in the Bible by which the Pope and his adherents may be brought to shame and confusion. And presently he emerged, announcing to me that the last barriers were overcome, and Adrienne was prepared to become an Anglican. I think that even the memory of Inkermann did not rejoice him so much as this triumph ; and the poor old man ever after regarded the

girl with a peculiar affection, as one saved from the errors of a straying Church through his own humble instrumentality.

Why linger over a time which is, to me above all, a bitter time to look back upon? I am sorry I began my story at all, because of the bitter pain of finishing it. We left Deal at the end of November, and returned to our own place in Hertfordshire. I went up to town, got called, made the usual arrangements common to young barristers who have not the smallest reason for expecting any practice—*i.e.*, took chambers for the transaction of as much work as Sir Roundell Palmer has to do—announced my approaching marriage, and then went down into the country, not to leave it again till I brought away my bride. It was arranged that we were to be married at the New Year.

I got down to Boughton Hall a fortnight

before Christmas. It was glorious weather—frosty, cold, bright. We had a little skating and plenty of walking. Adrienne did not care much about going out; so our own house was filled with people night after night, and we had impromptu dances, charades, and private theatricals. And then I found another accomplishment in my *fiancée*, for she was an accomplished actress. To please her, we performed little French pieces—the proverbs of Alfred de Musset, and those light and airy sketches where everything depends upon the acting. I dare say our own performances were bad enough—at least, my father was never tired of laughing at our accent; but Adrienne carried us through, and even at times inspired us with the power of acting, through the mere contagion of her own enthusiasm. And she seemed happy, too. The old fits of sadness, which had been wont to come over her, sometimes for days together, vanished altogether. To my-

self she was ever the same, cold and unemonstrative and unresisting. I might play with her delicate fingers, and run my hand through her hair as we sat together. I might kiss her cheek, if I pleased. I might call her all endearing epithets. She only seemed to yield. I thought little of her coldness at the time, which seemed to me maiden modesty. Afterwards, it helped to explain a great deal. And myself? I cannot understand, as I have said, my own feelings. I regarded her with an intensity of admiration which I can never again feel for another woman. For there does not, I believe, exist a woman in the world so bright, so ready to understand, so full of tact. But while I lavished my caresses upon her, and persuaded myself that I was madly in love with her, there was yet altogether wanting that softening of the heart at the very sound of her name, that trembling at her presence, which belongs to a young man's first love.

I was not—I think I could not have been—really in love with her. I was only dreaming of love. I was enchanted with her presence. I remember, one evening, we were reading poetry. I read to her Coleridge's most exquisite poem, "Genevieve." When I had read the verses, I looked up at her. There was no emotion in her eyes, which met mine with her cold and lustrous look; and for the moment my heart fell. But no misgivings on my part—none; no disloyalty to the pledge of my heart; no shaking of my faith. Adrienne was mine, and I was hers. We were to be one. Little by little the petals of that sweet and delicate blossom of love would unfold her, till I should have the full flower—an immortal Rose of Jericho. By degrees, I thought, I should learn to read all the secret workings of an entirely pure and unsullied page, a maiden's mind; until the *rapport* between us should be the most mystical and wonder-

ful, the perfect union of two souls, wrought by the power of wedded love.

Alas ! alas !—dreams—dreams—doomed to be shattered and destroyed !

On Christmas Eve we sat, we and our guests, round the big fire in the great hall, talking, and singing, and drinking punch, after the good old English fashion, which my father would not alter. He sat on one side in his great armchair. At his feet lay Adrienne, her head upon his knees, his hand in her hair, and caressing her smooth cheek. My mother was opposite. I, my heart full of happiness, next her. My father had been telling some stories of his Crimean campaign. He loved to talk of the war where he had won his rank and his title, especially to Adrienne, before whom he dilated upon the bravery of our gallant allies, and the friendships he had formed among them ; and presently twelve o'clock struck.

“ It is Christmas Day,” said my father.

"God bless us, every one! Only a week now, my children, and you will be a married pair. I pray that you may be as happy as your mother and I."

The tears came into his eyes, as he spoke with a full heart. Our guests were all old friends, before whom he could speak unservedly.

"Wedded life," he went on, after a pause, "is the only happy life. Edward, you do well to marry young. I could not. I was obliged to wait till I was thirty-five. I am not going to tell anybody how old you were, mamma."

"Indeed, you may," said my mother. "I was past thirty when we married. The bloom was off my youth."

"You are always beautiful, my dear," said the General. "God has been very good to us, my friends. I am not so thankful as I ought to be. Truly, we have been spared all trouble: no sadness has come to my home—

no disgrace to any of mine—no evil has fallen upon us.”

That night, how well I remember it, and the General's last words of thanksgiving because no evil had fallen upon us !

The evil was even then fallen, but we knew it not. That was reserved for the morning.

It was after church. Adrienne and myself were sitting alone by the fireside. Her hand was in mine ; and in perfect happiness, I sat silent.

There was the sound of wheels as a carriage drove up to the door, and in a few moments the servant opened the door, and gave me a card with the name of John Probyn written upon it.

“Who is Mr. John Probyn ?” I asked.

The question had no answer, for the owner of the card, a tall, strong-looking man, followed the servant into the room.

Adrienne rose to go.

"Pray don't go, mademoiselle," said our visitor ; "I have most particular and private business, in which your presence is necessary."

She sat down without saying a word, carelessly. I motioned the stranger to a seat.

"Perhaps," he said, "you will excuse my locking the door. My business is of a most painful nature."

What could it be ? I stared at him.

He put his hand in his pocket, and pulled out a paper.

"I am very sorry, Mr. —, most sorry. Prepare yourself for the most terrible thing that can happen to you."

Adrienne was lividly white—white as when I had laid her on the grass beside the murderer's stone at Deal ; and her hands were shaking in her lap, as she tried vainly to look unconcerned.

"Terrible thing ! What terrible thing ? Speak, man !" I cried.

"I must do my business at once," said he.
"Cruelty is the best kindness."

He made a step towards Adrienne, and called her by a new name—

"Amélie Clairet."

She sat motionless, save for the trembling of her lips.

"Amélie Clairet, you know why I am here."

She rose, putting her hand in her pocket. I noticed the gesture. The man was looking at me.

Then she came to me, and put her hand upon my shoulder.

"My friend—you will let me have a few words with him, will you not, Mr. Probyn? In your presence—oh! *bien entendu*—my friend, when your father thanked God last night that no evil thing had ever happened to him or his, I prayed solemnly that should the evil thing I feared come upon him, it might come before next week. I thank God,

now, that my prayer is answered. I am not Adrienne de Comarmond at all. I am Amélie Clairet, an actress—Amélie Clairet, a murderess!”

My lips parted, but I could not speak.

“I invented my lies to save myself. But I always knew I should be found out. The rest I could not help. If only you had not fallen in love with me, all would have been well; for it would not then have mattered.”

She let go my shoulder, and staggered to a seat. There was a tumbler and water on the table. Mr. Probyn poured out a glass, and gave it her. In a moment she went on again.

“Amélie Clairet, the murderess. I will tell you about it. You shall know the whole truth, and then you may hate me if you will. I cannot undo the past.

“I was young, and he loved me—my bright, my handsome, my darling. Alfred. He was a gentleman, and I was not a lady.

He could never marry me. What did I care? Marriage! Pah! It was invented by priests to make themselves strong. My father always said so. We loved each other, and we were happy. He was an officer in a cavalry regiment. Ah! mon Dieu! mon Dieu! how happy was I!

“He used to come and see me act every evening, with his brother officers. I always acted better when they were there. There is nothing I would not have done for the dear old regiment to which he belonged. I knew every officer in it, and all their stories—every sergeant—almost every man, and they all knew me. Ask them, if you will, what they would not have done for Mademoiselle Clairret, the actress.

“There’s something wrong in this world—something that might be set right—something that prevents people from being happy. It is with everybody—even, you see, Monsieur Edward, with that poor old man, that

good man, that kind and brave man, your father. Alas ! that he should ever have met with me. It was so with me. We were stationed—I mean the regiment was stationed—at Lyons. There was a young *avocat* who was in love with me. Why, I do not know. He threw bouquets for me on the stage ; he sent me letters ; he sent me fruit and flowers to my lodgings. At last he called himself one day: He threw himself at my feet, and begged me to marry him. He was ready to go anywhere, and do anything—to sacrifice all for my sake. I laughed at him—in the abundance of my happiness I laughed at him. Then he rose to his feet and called me names—called me a coquette, a heartless actress, and so on. I laughed the louder. Then he went away from me. I laughed again. At the theatre that night people looked at me earnestly, my colleagues whispered among each other ; but no one told me anything.

“Next day I was not at the theatre at all ; for the lawyer had gone straight from me to a café, and met my lover—my Alfred—and insulted him. They fought at daybreak, and with pistols ; and my Alfred was lying, when I ought to have appeared on the stage, dead upon his bed ; and I standing beside him, swearing, on his pale cold lips, that I would avenge his death.

“That was last May. All this has happened, you see, within a year. I had a little money, and I left the stage ; but I did not leave my plan of revenge. That I nursed and watched, while it grew and grew in my brain, and became ever a deeper purpose.

“I kept myself informed of my *avocat's* doings. He never saw me, and I suppose had forgotten my existence. I bought a revolver, and learned how to use it ; but I waited my time.

“In September he went north, to Normandy, with his wife. I forgot to say that

he was married. Yes ; this made it the better for me, you see, because the revenge would be the greater. I went, too, disguised, like an actress as I am, so that even he should not recognize me. Then, in that quiet little place by the seaside, I sat and watched.

“One evening—it was September the 26th, 1867, this very year—exactly one hundred years after that murder was done at Deal, Monsieur Edward—now you know why I turned pale and fainted—I saw him walking along the sands, away from the town. It was a lonely walk ; no one ever passed along that way. It was a wild and desolate place that the walk led to ; not a heath, like that place at Deal, but a cliff, up which the path climbed, and then passed along the edge, lonely and deserted. I put on my hat, and took my pistol, and followed.

“For half an hour he strolled leisurely along, smoking a cigar—I a hundred yards

behind him. Then he stopped, and after looking out at the sea for a few moments, turned idly back. I tore off my false hair, and stood before him in the path.

“ ‘Mademoiselle Clairet!’ he gasped.

“ ‘I am Amélie Clairet,’ I said. ‘You remember, monsieur, that morning, four months ago, when you stood by the riverside, above my lover’s dead body?’

“ ‘Mademoiselle has no right to reproach me with that fatal accident. I deplore it greatly.’

“ ‘Murderer! whose was the insult? Whose fault was it that the duel took place?’

“ ‘At least we had an equal chance. I risked my life.’

“ ‘Yes, you risked yours to take his. You risked yours to revenge yourself on me. You staked your life against my happiness, and you won the stake; but it is my turn now!’

“I raised my hand, and fired. I missed.

He rushed upon me. I steadied my nerves, and when he was only a few feet from me—when I could almost feel his hot breath upon my face, and could see the wild fear in his eyes—I fired again. He fell, and never spoke. To make my vengeance sure, I fired the other four chambers into him.

“Then I walked down the cliff, and made my way back to Paris. I wrote to an officer of the regiment—my regiment—and told him what I had done. He came to Paris, and hid me for a time. Then, because he could hide me no longer, he brought me to the coast; and on that day in October, when you saved me, he put me in the little vessel that was wrecked. Now you know all.

“I am sorry,” she said, bursting into tears—she had kept dry-eyed while she told the tale—“I am sorry—oh! so sorry, for the General, and madame, and you—oh, so very, very sorry! Tell me that you forgive me, Monsieur Edward, tell me that you forgive

me! What could I do otherwise? Oh! mon Dieu! what could I have done? Forgive me!"

She knelt at my feet. I could not answer, but by a sigh. I raised her up, and kissed her. As I kissed her, her forehead became cold — ice-cold. She stood erect for a moment; from her hand there fell a little bottle, which broke upon the floor—she had not touched it—and then, in a moment—I hardly saw her fall, because my eyes were dimmed—she lay upon the carpet, dead.

Her heart was broken long before. The misery of remorse—the dread of detection had broken it; and then the sudden shock came, and it ceased to beat.

Shall I go on? The General and my mother never knew. That Mr. Probyn was with us on law business connected with me was stated by that good fellow himself, who perjured himself at the inquest, with the most complete readiness, to save us pain. We

buried her in the country churchyard, in our own family vault. My broken-hearted father followed her a short year afterwards ; and the dreadful secret is mine alone.

E D E L W E I S.

A TALE OF 1776.



“ Look up above, where, blooming fair
Amid the mountains bleak and high,
Yon snowy tuft the storm defies—
It is the much-loved Edelweis ! ”

[My story takes its title from that greatly prized and lovely plant, the edelweis, which is found only on the highest and most inaccessible parts of the Tyrolese and Bavarian mountains. Its name signifies “ noble purity,” and from time immemorial the dwellers among the hills on which it grows have held it as the best gift that a lover can make to the maiden of his choice. Too frequently, in the unwritten folklore of those simple mountaineers, do stories recur that tell the tale of the young jäger found cold in death at the foot of the crag from which he had plucked the edelweis, the snowy tuft for which he had sacrificed his life clasped in the last unbending grasp of his lifeless hand.]

BRITZEN in the Tyrol, just a hundred years ago. Britzen very busy, in a mighty bustle

and fume and ferment. For what should all the village quit its humdrum ways sooner than to do fitting honour to its greatest man, mayor, and innkeeper, Emanuel Neuermarkt? And for what greater festival should the villagers keep their flowers and huzzas than the wedding of the mayor's daughters, Lotta and Margaret?

The day was yet young—for Britzen was always an early place—when the farmers and proprietors called with their wives on the innkeeper to enjoy the hospitality that awaited them, and wish him joy of the happy day; and their sons and daughters they brought with them to follow Lotta and Margaret to the chapel on the hillside. For with them the order of affairs at a wedding was the reverse of our practice. They met at the house of the bride's father, and ate their breakfast first, to strengthen their stomachs for the visit to the church that followed—though, for the matter of that,

feasting was kept up all the day after. Emanuel Neuermarkt was not the man to set a bad example to the people of his township on such an occasion. Dressed in his best flap-hat and jerkin and buckskin breeches, he sat in the best room of the Boar's Head, with good Dame Margaret, his spouse, in her clean linen frills, by his side; and heartily the honest couple bade welcome to all who came in, wishing them God-speed and good luck that day. The visitors bidden to the feast were those of their own rank in life, owners of flocks and herds—the notary, the doctor, and the priest; and for them the guest-room was strewn with clean, faint-smelling rushes, and the tables spread with good cheer on Dame Margaret's lily-white homespun napery. But Emanuel had by no means forgotten his poorer neighbours, and his maids and his drawer had orders to let no man pay for bite or sup at the sign of the

Boar's Head, in Britzen, that day ; but let the stout brown beer and the good red wine flow for all that came to the wedding of his daughters, Margaret and Lotta.

So, already, in the great kitchen of the inn, made warm by the iron oven in the wall—for though it was but early autumn, the weather was stormy and cold—a goodly company of callers kept looking in, to begin the day well with huge draughts of the mayor's home-brewed beer. Old men there were who remembered the day when Emanuel Neuermarkt himself was wed, three and twenty years gone by, and young fellows who wished they stood in the lucky bridegrooms' shoes that day ; for Lotta and Margaret were well known for the comeliest lasses for miles around, and their dowry—well, opinions differed ; but all put it down at a high figure, for the mayor had been known for a warm man this many a year. And one thing all wished, young and old—

good luck to the brides and bridegrooms, and that every man in Britzen was as rich as Emanuel Neuermarkt, innkeeper and mayor.

The sight of the inn kitchen was enough to make them envious that day: the stores of all sorts of provisions, the hams and bacon, the smoked geese and ducks, the goat's-milk cheeses, the ropes of onions, and bags of meal; and down the three cellar-steps such an array of barrels and hogsheads as brought tears into every toper's eyes—for it was ten o'clock in the morning then, and at twelve at night the feasting would be over. So they began to stuff and swill at once, and nearly ran poor Fritz the drawer off his legs to fill their flagons fast enough.

“The Lord be praised,” said he, as he came out of the cellar with a great can of beer, “that our daughters are not married every day!” Then, fearing he had said something unlucky, he added, looking up at

the smoked geese and hams—" Though may Heaven forgive me for saying that same, for they are both good girls, and not slow in saying a good word to all, gentle and simple, though they are their father's only children."

"And one shall have the Boar's Head some day," said a voice over a foaming cup—" though far off be the day, say I ; for we like good Master Neuermarkt well."

"Ay, ay," said a young peasant—who in an English village would have been a poacher, but here confined his pilferings to less debatable property—"he's a right good mayor, and here's his health !" (emptying his cup). "Now I mark it, there's only been three men in the stocks this year, and never a one in gaol."

"If there's a rotten stick in the fence it aye cracks first," said an old man. "Master Max shouldn't speak o' the stocks, that shouldn't he ; for if never a man in Britzen but three's been in 'em this year, Master

Max, I trow, 's been in 'em, arms and legs, more than three times this year."

The face of Max grew black at this speech, and in a corner of the kitchen two gossips whispered—

"And if never a one's been in gaol, some deserved to go. Who but Max had our brown goat?"

"And my three speckled fowls?"

"Ay, ay!"

But if in the kitchen of the Boar's Head all was feasting and jollity, in the guest-room, as the clumsy hands of the great wooden-cased clock moved on with certain strides nearer and nearer towards noon, the hearts of Master Emanuel and his dame grew heavier and heavier with every tick of the slow pendulum.

And in their little chamber in the thatched roof, Margaret was in tears, while Lotta tried in vain—with six other young friends in

white and rose coloured ribands—to wear a smile and cheer her sister.

Wilhelm Dorno, the miller's son, was Lotta's bridegroom ; and he was, with his father and mother and three stout brothers, in the room below, waiting to take his sweetheart to the chapel of Saint Cecilia on the hill.

But where was Carl Lütbeck, Margaret's bridegroom ? What kept him away ? It was no fear of his constancy to his true love these three years that made Margaret's gentle eyes well over with scalding tears.

She cried so piteously over the bridal dress she would not suffer her bridesmaids to put on her, because she feared some accident had befallen her beloved Carl, in his long journey from München. She had had a dream. She accepted the ill omen, and with true womanly obstinacy refused to be comforted. So she wept, and her companions tried in vain to cheer her.

“Don’t fret and fidget, good wife,” old Neuermarkt said. “Carl will be here in time, depend on it. There’s a good hour for him yet.”

“Ay,” said old Dorno the miller, “he’s a brave lad—with his pistols in his saddle, I’ll wager my life—and the road from München is all good road, though it’s many a long mile to come; and he’s got company too—Albrecht will be with him.”

The notary, who sat at the oak table in the window, with his papers ready to be signed, spread them out, took his horn spying-glass from his pocket, and scanned the fair parchments afresh.

“What say you, Master Notary?” asked Dame Neuermarkt. “It’s ill luck,” she sighed, “putting off a wedding day, even if nothing has happened the lad—which the Virgin and all the saints forbid, for ’twould break my poor Margaret’s heart!” And she reverently crossed herself.

"Thou'rt like her—soft-hearted, dame. Margaret was always her mother's chick." And the worthy man tried to laugh, as much to cheer himself as the rest.

Then, in a little cracked voice, the notary spoke—

"Let us give every circumstance due attention," he said. "Carl and Albrecht Lütbeck were to have been here yesterday. They had two days' ride of it from München. They are lads of good business habits, as young cloth merchants should be. Some bargain or sale may have kept them, and so delayed their start. Again, a horse may have fallen lame, or cast a shoe, leagues from a farrier's. They must lead the lame steed at footpace to an inn, and every village has not got an hostelry like the Boar's Head, where a change of horses can always be got——"

"Ay, ay, the notary speaks well, dame," said the innkeeper. "I expect a horse has

fallen lame. The poor beasts always do when you want them sound."

"But sure the other would have galloped on to tell us, or sent us a message; for this sad fright is killing my poor girl. We can but wait and hope. The blessed saints aid and keep the poor lads!" ejaculated the miller's wife, piously.

And all the women crossed themselves.

So the time passed too slowly and too fast. The suspense was hard to bear. Some of the guests rose, and said they would walk to the top of the town, and see if they could hear anything of the young men. The others stayed, and tried to cheer their host and Dame Neuermarkt. Poor Margaret lay, faint and sick, in her chamber, and was altogether beyond the doctor's skill. There was, out of the pharmacopœia, only one medicine that could cure her. It was called Carl. As she woke from her fainting fits, Carl's name was upon her lips, Carl's image in her heart.

“ Oh, Carl, Carl—my Carl is dead—dead ! ”

This was all they got from her.

It wanted a quarter of twelve by the sundial on the green opposite the inn, and twenty minutes by the clock in the parlour, when young Dorno came racing in, breathless with excitement and haste.

“ Here they come—here they come, in a postchaise ! We could see it from the top of the hill.”

You may guess how every face brightened at this news.

“ There, dame—I told you so,” said the innkeeper. “ I say, dame, put the clock back a quarter or so. Time’s never o’ much matter at Britzen—eh, neighbours ? We fixed twelve to be at the chapel. We can walk it in a quarter of an hour comfortably.”

He had scarcely spoken when the wheels of a chaise were heard rolling down the village street.

“My word!” said old Dorno. “What a pace they come at! It might be the King’s coach, for the rattle.”

“He drives fast who drives for life, Master Dorno—or, for the matter o’ that, for a wife either.”

Headed by Neuermarkt, they all rushed out in a posse to welcome Carl and Albrecht, while you might have counted near twenty heads with caps on at the windows in the long roof.

“Da ist das Wirthshaus,” cried a military-looking man inside.

“That’s not Carl’s voice. Oh, my poor girl!” sobbed Dame Neuermarkt; and she turned faint, and fell into the miller’s arms.

They were two officers in the chaise, posting from München to Trient.

Had they seen two young men on their way?

Carl and Albrecht Lütbeck were described in a dozen different ways at once, by a dozen eager voices.

At Innspruck they had slept at the same Wirthshaus.

Last night, some ten leagues back on the road, they had seen two horses, riderless, start out of the forest, cross the road, and lose themselves again in the pines.

"Then," said Master Neuermarkt, almost beside himself with fear and alarm, "neighbours, there will be no wedding to-day. Lotta and Wilhelm can't go to church without my poor Margaret and Carl. Ah, me! gentlemen, the day that was to be our happiest is our saddest. It's but poor entertainment we can offer you at the Boar's Head."

But Dorno the miller was of a practical, soldier-like mind. He took the command when his old friend was unequal to it.

"Go, one of you, to the priest, and tell him," said he. "And now let every one of you that has a horse to ride, or legs to carry him, bring meat and wine in his wallet, his

fowling-piece, and his lantern ; and let us start and find out the truth."

"If you will horse us," said the two officers, "we will lead you to the spot where we saw the two nags gallop through the woods."

Two short-legged mountain cobs were soon found ; and in less than an hour, with the soldiers and Dorno the miller at its head, the expedition to find Carl and Albrecht started, followed by the prayers and old shoes of all the village.

II.

AT three o'clock the day before, in the afternoon, the brothers Lütbeck were riding along, at a steady pace, on two as good nags as ever stout legs crossed. Their path lay over mountains and through forests, in which wild game was plentiful ; though, in the

gloomy pines, they could see nothing twenty yards from their horses' heads, so thick was the canopy of branches overhead. But the roadway was clear and light. There would be darkness from seven till ten. Then the moon would be high enough to light them to Margaret and Britzen. They had but nine leagues to compass. Their horses were fresh; their riders light-hearted, singing and talking as they trotted along the sandy road, or cantered over the mossy turf by the side of the carriage track. They knew the way well from München to Britzen, for they had been over it a hundred times. As they neared their journey's end, familiar hills and dales made Carl's heart leap for joy. It was three months since he had seen his love, and only three letters had passed between the betrothed pair in that time.

"But nine short leagues between thee and thine, brother," said Albrecht, as they emerged into the open after three leagues of forest.

"Dost thou not wish thou couldst fly to thy mate, like yonder dove to his?"

Carl rode on in silence.

"She will make thee the best wife in the world," Albrecht went on. "And won't all Britzen envy her the chatelaine thou takest her, that came all the way from Paris!"

"I know something Margaret would like better," said Carl; "for the girl always liked things simple better than costly goods."

"Thyself!" said his brother, laughing. "Thou'rt simple enough, in all conscience, Carl; and hast been since first thou wert in love."

"I mean a bunch of edelweis, Albrecht. It is always the lover's best gift. The hills we're among now have more of it than those about Britzen. I'd give ten good gold pieces to hold a tuft in my hand this minute."

They rode on a league—Albrecht's keen eye looking all about him for a likely spot for the fragile flower to be found upon. Their

road lay over a mountain path, with steep crags towering above their heads on one side, on the other the black forest of pines.

“Why should we not try to find and gather a bunch of edelweis for Margaret’s hair to-morrow? It is but a year or two since we thought nothing of climbing such a crag as this,” said Albrecht, striking the perpendicular rock with the butt end of his whip.

But Carl said they had better push on. His heart was already at the Boar’s Head in Britzen.

“Nay, why not?” Albrecht persisted. “Look where the sun is. It is but three o’clock by the day. Let us tie our horses to this white ash, climb these crags, and before the sun is four quarters nearer his bed, you shall have a hatful of the lover’s flowers ; for—

‘Where low the white ash grows,
On high the edelweis blows.’

Come, here goes for one!" And the young man threw himself from his horse, and before Carl had time to remonstrate with him, he had tied the bridle in a knot round one of the branches of the white ash.

His brother rode on a few yards; then turned his horse round, and slowly dismounted.

"My heart forbids me hinder time in this schoolboy freak," he said; "but, Albrecht, since we were boys together thou hast always had thy way, so it must even be as thou wilt have it now, I suppose. Wait, my man, till thou hast a wife to rule thee."

But Albrecht was already busily occupied in scaling the precipitous ascent to the summit of the crag, where, his experience taught him, the flower would be found, if it grew on the rocks at all. Carl followed more slowly in the track of his impetuous brother, but a little wide of the path he took. It was hard work for both; but they were young

and strong, and they managed to fit their toes into clefts and crevices, and hoist themselves from crag to crag by grasping the stunted brushwood, with the sureness of foothold and clutch gained by practice. They climbed like Zouaves. At last Albrecht reached the top, and hallooed Carl with a shout of joy.

“Carl, man!”

“Hast found it?”

“Ay, here it is—we can fill thy hat with blooms.”

With elastic step, Carl joined him, and they speedily stripped the rock of its prize; and felt no more giddy over their exploit, as they looked down at the horses in the ravine, than two eagles would have done.

“Remember, thou tellest Margaret ’twas her brother, not her husband, that found the flowers.”

“This is an omen of good luck. I should have been a league nearer Britzen by this

but for thee. I thank thee for making me halt."

"Now for the getting down again," said Albrecht, as a piece of rock, detached by his foot, bounded over root and stump, till it reached the bottom and broke into a thousand pieces.

"Gently, there—be careful! So, not too fast," said the more cautious Carl.

They reached the bottom in safety with their precious booty; and the instant their feet touched the ground they saw in the narrow road, between them and their horses, a grizzly bear coming towards them at a comfortable jog-trot. There was something in the way he carried himself that showed he was a bear in search of a supper. Not a pleasant sight; but they had fought a bear before in honest chase.

Carl pulled Albrecht's coat, and pointed, to make sure he saw their danger.

“Opposite ways! Quick!—he does not see us,” Carl whispered.

Instantly they separated, striking noiselessly into different paths. But if the bear did not see, he smelt—Carl, and followed him as fast as four great legs could shamble.

Young Lütbeck put his hand to his belt. It grasped his powder-flask. His flint pistol hung harmlessly in the holster at his saddle-bow, a hundred yards away. He turned pale: the pallor of a brave man in mortal danger. He faced round. Albrecht was out of sight and danger. Thank God for that! He took one look at the great shaggy monster dogging him, and ran for Margaret Neuermarkt as hard as two sinewy legs ever carried lithe body. But for the biped the way was rough, for the quadruped smooth; so the match was unequal, and the bear gained on him every second. He stumbled—was almost on his face on the

ground. He felt the bear within a few paces of him. With one great effort he pulled himself together, dashed forward, and gained a gnarled and lightning-blasted oak. He climbed the trunk with the quickness of a squirrel, and for a moment had the best of the race for life. But the brown bear could climb too. He looked with hungry, angry eyes at Carl, and followed.

Carl swarmed the highest of the long, leafless branches. It was a large limb, knotty on the surface, from which the bark had all peeled off, and was hollow inside.

Carl reached the extremity, and stuck one booted leg down the hollow part to keep himself from falling. The monster halted at the bottom of Carl's branch, and tried it carefully. Then he came circumspectly up towards his prey.

Ten years of his life—twenty—anything—everything, but life and Margaret—would Carl have given for his trusty flint pistol.

The bear's muzzle touched him, and the bear's teeth felt sharp through the leather of the boot that Carl could not now move. His other leg was stuck fast in the tree. The next thing, the great beast tore the toe of his boot off and part of the flesh of Carl Lütbeck's toes with it. The pain made him writhe. With his pocket-knife he made a dash at the beast's eyes ; but the bear, with a stroke of his paw, sent the knife spinning through the branches of the tree.

"All the saints preserve me !" he cried, and gave himself up for a dead man, expecting to be eaten piecemeal, in rather large mouthfuls ; and curiously wondering, at the same time, how long he should suffer pain after the bear had eaten the leg that dangled from the branch his other leg was stuck fast in.

But among the saints he prayed to, his patron saint must have heard him ; for as the bear moved forward a single pace to

make the work more easy, the happiest idea of Carl's life struck him.

He filled his hand with gunpowder from his flask, and threw it with all his force into the eyes of his foe. Instantly, with a shake of his head and a furious growl, the great beast descended to the main trunk of the tree.

Carl thanked Heaven, and invoked all the saints again. By the time he had done so, the bear was up his branch again, and ready to set on him with tenfold fury. As he seized Carl's foot, a second shower of gunpowder blinded him. He gave a great howl of pain and rage, and precipitately leaving the tree, trotted off again through the wood, frightening the horses out of their wits as he passed them, causing them to break their bridles, and gallop off at a breakneck pace down the road.

When this was over, Carl's nerves gave way. With one foot bleeding fast, the other

leg stuck tight in the tree, and Albrecht out of call, he fainted dead away.

III.

POOR Albrecht had run from their foe as hard as he could, without even looking round to see how Carl was faring. He took it for granted that, as the bear was not following him, he was not following his brother, but quietly pursuing the even tenour of his way along the high road to Innsbruck. So he hid away in a natural cleft in the rock for some twenty minutes; after which interval of time, feeling pretty certain the bear was a good mile on his way to Innsbruck, he stole cautiously back to the high road, and put first his nose and then his head over a great whin bush that overhung the way.

Seeing nothing to fear, he next ventured into the road, and looked about him. Then he called Carl in a low voice; then louder

and louder, till "Carl—C-a-r-l!" rang back again from the rocks that skirted the road. Then his eye caught the ash, on the bough of which the fragments of their horses' bridles hung, flapping to and fro in the wind.

"Ah! the bear went that way. The horses are gone. Carl must have gone that way, followed by the fierce pursuer. Oh, Heaven! what has become of him?"

And Albrecht ran on as fast as he could, every step he took leaving poor Carl farther behind. He ran at the top of his speed as far as his strength allowed. At last, spent and weary with running, and shouting at intervals in the hope of making his brother hear, he reached a woodman's hut, where he sank exhausted. When he came to again, he found himself on a rude bed in the cottage, tended by a kind old woman. He told his tale, and never slept another wink; for the dame said his brother must have been eaten by the bear—escape was impossible! She enlivened his

wakeful hours by telling him all the stories of people eaten by bears current in the neighbourhood.

Next day, in a desperate plight, the poor lad started to push his way afoot to the nearest town, where he could get a horse to carry him to Britzen. What a tale he had to tell when he got there! It would be the death of Margaret—perhaps of Lotta too. It was three hours past noon when he got a horse. An hour later he met the cavalcade that had left Britzen in search of the Lütbecks. He told his story, and all believed Carl dead, except the soldiers and the miller Dorno. Headed by their leaders, they all pushed on apace to the spot on the road where the young men had been confronted by the bear on the previous afternoon.

After a long search, and a great hallooming, they were answered by a faint voice. They found Carl still fast in the tree, and half dead from cold and stiffness.

And not a man Jack of them had saw or hatchet; but they gave him brandy while these were fetched from a house a league off.

It was dark when the little army reached Britzen. They were met at the entrance of the village by all those who had stayed behind.

“My Carl, my Carl!” shrieked a pale woman. “You bring him dead!” for she saw a cart in which a muffled form lay.

Carl’s voice answered. Carl placed in Margaret’s hands the bunch of flowers that had so nearly cost him his life.

The next day there was a double wedding in Britzen, for Margaret said—

“We must be wed before those holy blooms have time to fade.”

The soldiers stayed to do honour to the feast; and in proposing the health of the

bridegrooms, old Pförtner, the priest, ended his speech with this verse :—

“ Be this our holy, high ambition—
Whate'er our failings past and gone—
To rise above our sad condition,
Seek noble purity alone ;
And, boldly mounting toward the skies,
Gain, e'en in death, our Edelweis.”

LOVE FINDS THE WAY.

THE flat grey stone front of Haughmond Hall looked cheerless in the early dawn of a January morning in the year 1794. One bit of bright colour only broke the drab monotony of its upper storey—the face of its master, that instant clean shaved in cold water, and now appearing, as rosy as Aurora, at his open dressing-room window.

“Keep your hands down, boys,” he called out.

Five stable-boys, riding five promising four-year-olds at exercise in the park on the

other side of the ha-ha, looked up at the Squire's window together, touched the peaks of their caps together, and, skirting the lawn, trotted gently away under a clump of beeches, and so out of sight.

Mr. Haughmond went on with his toilet. By the time the horses came round again he had tied his long green-and-white checked neckerchief twice or thrice round his full neck and made a neat and sportsmanlike little bow under his chin.

"Take 'em on a bit faster" was the Squire's command. Five hands rose in acknowledgment of the head at the window, and five pairs of vigorous young heels at the same moment pressed their horses' flanks. They disappeared behind the beeches at a smart pace, and the Squire put on his morning jacket.

"They'll do," he said, as the last pair of hind hoofs in the string was lost to view, and, drawing in his head from the window, he

picked up his keys and money from the dressing-table, counting the latter with the care of a methodical man ; and then he warily dropped his cumbrous great gold repeater into his fob.

As he laid his hand on the heavy brass handle of his bed-room door, there came through the thick oak panels sounds of anxious scratching and whining on the other side, and directly a space of a few inches permitted, two white fox-terriers—prime favourites of their master—bounded into the room and wished him good morning as plainly as if they had spoken in the purest Saxon. While the Squire searched in the pockets of the clothes he had worn the evening before the dogs sniffed about the room. The result of his search was a great letter, six inches square, rather the worse for the Squire's after-dinner custody, sealed on the obverse with the arms of the Elliots of Whitewell, and addressed on the reverse in the somewhat

boyish small-text hand of the heir of that house, to

“Miss Georgiana Haughmond,

“per favour of

“Gilbert Haughmond, Esq.”

Having straightened out the creases and put the corners right, the Squire, preceded by his terriers, went downstairs into the hall, where he stuck the letter in a prominent place in the letter-rack—a contrivance of sporting design which hung in the window to the right of the door, faced on the opposite shutter by a collection of seaweeds, and flanked by Mr. Haughmond’s select library of twenty-one more or less useful and entertaining volumes, which reposed in well-dusted array in the window-seat. It was towards the window to the left of the hall door that the Squire now directed his attention. Here, among his fishing-rods and guns, hung his weather-glass. This long-suffering piece of furniture came in for its usual morning allowance of

thumps ; after which, having thoroughly satisfied himself of the state of the weather, Squire Haughmond turned his steps towards his stable-yard. As he takes a short cut through his shrubbery and kitchen-garden, let me say a word about him. First he is a foxhunter—an M.F.H. of five-and-twenty years' standing ; secondly, he is a widower of fifty-five, blessed with an only child — Georgiana — whom he has brought up from infancy with such slight assistance as was absolutely necessary from governesses ; thirdly, he is a very red-faced elderly gentleman, to whom it is a great trouble that he seldom scales under sixteen stone. In politics, he is a Tory. In religion, he takes his nap in the family pew twice on every Sunday, from Advent to the last of the "after Trinitys." His views in relation to foreign affairs may be gathered from the remark he made when a nobleman of the county, who had hunted hounds badly for three or four seasons, was appointed to an

important embassy, that "he was good for nothing else." In home affairs Mr. Haughmond was supremely satisfied with his own doings. Popular as a sportsman ; passionate, but kind, as a master and landlord ; as a magistrate, dealing out rough-and-ready justice ; obstinate as a pig.

Squire Haughmond found his bosom friend, the Reverend Mr. Downes, vicar of the parish, and perpetual curate of Potcote as well, dismounting from a smart crop-tailed cob in the stable-yard.

The friends shook hands across the cob's broad back.

"Well, squire."

"Well, parson."

"The wind shifted sou'-west as I was riding home last night. There'll be a heavenly scent to-day."

"It's the best scenting day we've had for a month, in my opinion. We shall have a run—mark me. I'm going to draw Wind-

mill Gorse first, and I haven't drawn that blank six times in thirty years."

"My eye, how soon that bay's legs got right!" exclaimed the parson, critically scanning a great bright bay of the Squire's own breeding.

"My doctoring, Downes," explained the Squire with a triumphant smile.

Having given his directions about the horses for the day's sport, Mr. Haughmond led the way to the kennels. At the end of a walk bordered on either side by high laurels was an ivied archway, guarded by two stone foxes; behind it were the quarters of the pack. Here the Squire was quite in a congenial element. His hounds were deserving of their widespread fame. Most of them he had bred from Lazarus, a draft from the Duke's, whose broad head the Squire now patted fondly, saying—

"One of the best dogs I ever cheered."

"He is a made one!" cried the parson,

caressing the old hound admiringly, while his friend went into the details of feeding with his head man, and personally superintended the mixing of a pudding for the pack.

"Come, then. How's your appetite?" said the Squire, when his labours were ended. "It's time to think about breakfast."

"I'm your man," was the ready response.

"Tell you what it is, Jack Downes, you fellows at Elliot's last night won more of me than I thought. I could not make my money right by half a guinea this morning."

"I did not have it, I'll swear to that," protested the parson.

"You won, though, I know. Never knew you lose. You've the best luck of any man I ever knew, and I've the worst."

"At cards, Squire. Only at cards."

"At everything. Look here, now. Last week I lose a mare worth four hundred guineas, if she was worth a brass farthing, and her foal and all. And now, here's

Georgy refuses when I put her at young Elliot. But she shall have him. I've made up my mind to that. I told the old boy so after you left last night. 'Your son and my son-in-law,' I said, clapping the young one on the back. I always have liked the Elliots. They're the right strain. The lad runs like a good straightforward fox that knows his country—bred in it—none of your Leadenhall bag gentlemen. Goes out of the room and writes it all out in black and white there and then. That's what I like ; and I put the letter in my pocket. She shall have him."

Talking in this strain, the two sportsmen found their way into the dining-room.

The Squire planted himself with his broad back to the fireplace, in which the logs were just brightening to a blaze. Two greyhounds, who had long since said good-bye to slips and stakes, lay dozing on the hearth so comfortably that they hardly cared to lift

an eyelid or wag a tail for their master. A pure-bred bulldog occupied the place of honour, and growled lazily at the terriers following closely on their master's heels. Everything about the place was pure, from a breeder's point of view. All the cats were black, the cocks were black-breasted reds, the bulls were the fathers of Coates's catalogue, the cart-horses were Punches, and the hunters the progeny of well-tried winners over many a mile of emerald turf. Above the carved oak chimney-piece behind the Squire hung his portrait, presented by the members of his hunt. On the south, east, and west walls hung pictures of a celebrated greyhound, the interior of a cockpit, and a famous racehorse. There was one print in the room : it hung between the windows, and was the portrait of Sir Tregonwell Frampton, the father of the Turf, and erst keeper of the King's running horses. A trophy of foxes' heads and brushes, spurs,

riding-whips, and hunting-horns was fixed over the door, and a silver cup or two adorned the sideboard.

The table was laid for breakfast, and was spread with substantial fare. The parson seated himself one yard from the cloth, cut the tip off a tongue, pared it into slices of wafer-like thinness, and ate them meditatively.

The Squire reverted to the topic of young Elliot's proposal.

"She's as obstinate as a mule ; but I'll let her see before I've done with her."

"Women are the doose," said the Reverend John Downes, who was a bachelor.

"They are ; and so was her mother," said the Squire ungrammatically, and by way of response.

The parson poised a thin slice of the tongue on the point of his knife and gave an assenting grunt.

"Look how that girl can ride !" continued

the father ; " what hands she's got ; what an eye she's got ; and what judgment ! Haven't I brought her up to hounds ever since she could say ' Forrard ' ? And what for, I should like to know. My ' First Whip.' I should like to see a man that's up to the work like she is."

" She's a clinker at her fences—any mortal thing. I love to see her take timber !" said the parson soothingly.

" She's my daughter, Downes," said the Squire. " And there's young Elliot," he added, " and everything that I have always made up my mind to. And the old man a little—a little——"

" Dickey on his forelegs," said his reverence feelingly.

" Ay ! that's the word. We are all mortal : and his land marches field for field and fence for fence with mine, a good two mile and a half here, to say nothing of all the Killick property. But Georgiana runs quiet in double

harness before this year's out, take my word for it, or my name's not Gilbert Haughmond."

"Girls are a 'nation deal of trouble. If I had had children I should have liked boys."

"So should I," said the Squire. "But I'm not tied. What's mine's my own, and I can leave my land to Dick Cutpurse if I like. No Wiltons shall ever have an inch of it. I don't know which I hate most, your skunk of a brother that I was fool enough to give my other living to, and then be beat by him at the assizes, or old Jack Wilton."

"They're a pretty pair of scoundrels," said the parson, in whom love of cards, foxhunting, and good eating outweighed fraternal affection—by tons.

"And it's that man's Mohock of a son that my daughter must gallop after full cry! Very pretty!"

Mr. Haughmond expressed what remained of his feeling upon this matter by pulling the bulldog's tail till he showed all his teeth.

The bell in the stable-yard had just done ringing for half-past eight. The dining-room door opened, and the butler made his appearance, carrying two large and foaming flagons of October, holding a good three pints each, one of which he sat down before his master, and the other before Mr. Downes. He was followed by six or eight other servants, male and female, with that drooping carriage and downcast expression which meant prayers a century ago, and means prayers now.

“Prayers?” said the parson.

“Yes, be hanged to ’em,” said the Squire, referring, I am happy to say, not to the prayers—an institution of Church and State—but to the Wilton family. He took a comforting pull at the ale, and then composed himself in his easy-chair for devotion. On all hunting days—which at Haughmond Hall were three days a week from the 26th of July to the 3rd or 4th of May—the parson breakfasted with his friend the Squire. Advantage

was accordingly taken on these mornings of the presence of a clergyman, and five minutes were devoted to a service which Mr. Haughmond persevered with as a duty—irksome, perhaps, but still a duty incumbent on his station as a Squire, a Tory, and a Churchman.

Immediately after prayers Miss Haughmond, who seldom graced these week-day religious services with a personal attendance, made her appearance—a tall, fine country girl of twenty, with eyes as large as sloes and as dark, and plenteous tresses of hair black and glossy as the raven's wing. Beneath the subdued melancholy that properly distinguishes the young lady crossed in love, Miss Haughmond's features wore an expression of resolute courage and masculine determination—qualities she inherited from her father. She seated herself at the table opposite him. After the usual interchange of salutations, breakfast proceeded in silence, broken only

by the din of the weapons with which the Squire and the parson attacked the cold sirloin. In the way of liquids, there was October for the men and tea for the lady : the solids comprised beef, corned and roast ; brawn, ham, tongue, and game pie. "Hungry as a hunter" is a proverb which applies as well to breakfast as to dinner. For generations your true foxhunter has enjoyed the rare privilege of waking with a keen appetite. Squire Haughmond and Parson Downes were no exceptions to this rule, and, as they had a long voyage before them, provisioned accordingly. When they had finished their meal, Mr. Haughmond turned his attention to his daughter.

"We shall have a pretty run to-day, Georgy ; so cheer up, girl. Come with me into my room. I've some good news for you."

As they crossed the hall her father gave her the letter. It did not want woman's instinct to guess what it was.

Georgiana followed her father into his justice-room, where many a poacher had trembled in his shoes.

Now Mr. Haughtmond kept a diary, and his daughter, as well as being his first whip, was his amanuensis. The entries in the volume were short and pithy—

“Took a bad guinea at Hexham Fair.”
“The skewbald fell with me.” “William threw the skewbald down.” “Windmill Gorse : lots of foxes ; Clasher noisy at fences ; found soon ; young hounds joined in the cry.” “Attended quarter sessions.” These are examples of the most noteworthy events in the Squire’s life which were held worthy of record in his diary.

“Have you found the place ?” he asked, standing behind his daughter.

“Yes, father.”

“What’s the last ?”

“‘Lictor shows symptoms of tongue.’”

“Ah ! Go on, then. ‘7th, Dined at Elliot’s.

Lost three guineas, and damn the luck at cards.' Got that?"

"Yes, sir. Without swearing at the luck."

"Very well. 'Edward Elliot asked for Georgiana. Gave my consent with much pleasure.'"

The colour mantled to the girl's cheeks. The pen hung hesitatingly in her white fingers. Then she wrote her father's words on the page without a shake, adding to the entry on her own account: "But I will never give mine, G. H.," and held the declaration of independence under her father's nose.

The Squire flew into a great rage.

"Madam!" he thundered.

"Sir," quietly replied his daughter.

"I've set my heart on this. I have. After all I've done for you! An empress could not have had such horses to ride as you have had, nor a queen could not have been taught to ride straighter. Are you going to defy me?"

“I hope, ‘sir,” Georgiana answered, with the usual feminine evasion of the direct question, “I hope that you will not be so unreasonable as to persist in urging me to marry the writer of this letter.”

“Unreasonable, she calls it—unreasonable! Now that’s too good.”

“There is nothing to be said against Mr. Wilton,” continued the young lady, shifting her ground; “he may not have much money, but——”

“You’ll bring no Wiltons here, I can tell you; and to cut matters short,” said the Squire, pulling out his watch, “as we’ve got nine miles to ride to cover, once for all, when young Elliot asks you for an answer you’ll say ‘Yes.’”

“Oh, father!——”

“And if you won’t do it out of love for me—and nobody can say I haven’t been one father out of ten thousand to you—I’ll have you to understand my authority is to be respected.”

“Father,” she cried, “you know I love you dearly.”

She put out her arms, but the Squire stood back a step or two.

“But I have given my promise to Mr. Wilton. I love him better than all the world. You have opposed me all along ; but women are not to be forced into marrying to please even their fathers. I can be happy with nobody else, and I mean to have him.”

With this spirited speech the young Diana closed the door behind her, and left her father to his fury and the perusal of Elliot’s letter, which lay crumpled on the floor.

“Very well, my lady ! very well, indeed,” he said, as the door closed behind her ; “we shall see who is master, you or I.”

The meet that day was at Windmill Gorse, a place in high favour with the foxhunters of the district—a sure find and a good run. There were nearly a hundred horsemen in

the field, to say nothing of rustics on foot. The dismantled mill crowned a gentle rise, on which were several acres of old gorse. From the summit you could count eight church steeples, and see into four adjoining counties. Well-timbered pasture land of sound old turf stretched in all directions as far as the eye could see. It was a paradise for sportsmen, and its effect told upon none more than upon Squire Haughmond, who arrived in huntsman's time, at a quarter-past ten sharp. Mounted on a slashing grey, arrayed in a green cloth coat, with a leathern belt round his ample waist, black velvet cap, and mahogany tops, buckling behind, the master rode with pride among his brother sportsmen. Georgiana followed, mounted on her favourite mare, a dark-brown, fifteen three, on short legs, and with most powerful quarters, her blue habit setting off her fine figure to the greatest advantage.

As she rode into the field, a little way

behind her father and the parson, she was quickly singled out by the admiring eye of the pretender to her hand, young Elliot. He cantered across the field, and raising his hat to her, tried to read his fate in her eyes. But he could read nothing there.

The lady took the initiative.

"Mr. Elliot," she said, looking coyly down, "I am very much flattered by your proposal."

"I am sure——" Elliot began, placing a large ungloved hand on his heart.

"Do not for a moment misunderstand me, sir," Georgiana proceeded.

His heart thumped against his side.

"I can never give my hand to you. My heart is already given away."

"Miss Haughmond, if I might hope to win your affections, I would wait—any time—if you would only let me try. I would do anything for you. Give me one chance, pray."

“Mr. Elliot, delay would be worse than useless. I can trust to your honour. Promise me you will keep what I am about to tell you a secret from everybody for one hour.”

Elliot gave her his word.

“I am going to be married this morning at Kingscote Church.’

At this the young man opened his eyes very wide.

“Then—then I wish I was in somebody else’s shoes. Is it Harry Wilton?”

“Yes,” said Georgiana. “Now keep your promise;” and giving her bridle a shake, she started off at a canter for a coppice that skirted the field.

The first thought that came into the mind of the rejected lover was to go anywhere out of sight; his next impulse was to gallop as hard as he could, and soothe his disappointed feelings by taking everything that came in his way.

The Squire had put his hounds into the gorse, and was trying the cover in his most scientific fashion.

“Yooi in ! in yooi ! yoicks ! yoicks !”

The bristly green spikes are alive with white tails. Now a hound speaks. The Squire knows the voice.

“Hark ! hark ! That’s Vengeance speaking.”

Silence again among the hounds.

“Get together ; push him up ; push him up. Yooi in ; yoicks !”

Two voices from the far corner of the gorse now.

“Hark ! Vengeance again. Push him up. Yooi, yooi, yooi-i-icks !”

A view-halloo from the corner of the field. Out come the hounds, well together, and the music is general.

“Gone away. Hark forrard ! Yi haro, forrard ! yi haro !”

Away rides the Squire behind his pack,

with a mounted irregular cavalry nearer his hounds than he likes.

“Hold hard there, gentlemen, if you please. Plague take you!” to a farmer’s son, mounted on a puller and plunger, taking his first lesson in sport. “Can’t you come back there?”

And, led by Vengeance, the pack plunge into the spinney, to which Georgiana had betaken herself. But the bird had flown on the wings of love a couple of miles on the bridle-road to Kingscote Church.

By her side rode the man she had chosen to take in such a very unconventional way for better—her love told her there could be no worse with Harry Wilton.

“Isn’t it delightful?” she exclaimed.

“I am the happiest fellow in the world. For your sake, though, I would rather have had your father’s consent.”

“Don’t be a bit afraid, Harry. He’ll storm and rage; but he’ll forgive us. I

know he will ; and he never would have let me have you if he'd waited—well—for ever.”

“ We have waited a precious long time, darling, as it is.”

“ And I'll take all the blame. It *was* my idea, was it not, Harry ? ”

“ All yours, my own ! and a very clever idea too, and worthy of my Georgy's bright wits.”

“ I love anything romantic,” cried the beautiful girl.

“ Except a hero of romance, Georgy. You can't make that out of me.”

“ I love you—with—all—my—heart.”

If they had been walking, her lover would have kissed her lips ; as it was he kissed the gold knob of her riding-whip.

“ I wonder if my father has missed me yet.”

Then she wondered if they had found a fox—wondered what her father would say when he knew the truth—wondered if young

Elliot would hint at her escape; and her lover did his best to reassure her, for even the boldest young ladies require the support of the most comforting assurances under such trying circumstances.

"Oh, Harry dear! let us ride faster. I feel that unless I gallop like mad I shall never keep up my courage to do it."

"Come, then. But never say that. It is not like my brave Georgy. Hark! I thought I heard a cry," exclaimed Wilton, looking round.

"Oh! where?" cried Georgiana, turning pale as paper.

"Did you see that fellow there, through the gap? Dash the Dutch! they're not hunting."

"They're hunting us," replied the girl.

"Come on. Now for it."

"Straight across country, Harry."

"As the crow flies."

"Here they come down the hill. There's

only one way out of it ; we must pound them."

" Who are they ? "

" Parson Downes and Mr. Elliot, and my father is not far behind."

A cry followed them ; but they rode like the wind. A double post and rails was the first obstacle to their runaway progress. Georgiana cleared it at once ; Harry made two jumps of it. On they raced, neck and neck, over a broad meadow. The fence was what has since been called a bullfinch. They cleared it together, and ventured to look back. Their pursuers had not gained on them a yard. A gallop of three hundred yards over ridge and furrow brought them face to face with a stiff fence, hedge, bank, and post and rail. Georgiana's splendid animal took it in its stride ; but Harry Wilton made a mess of it, and tasted dirt.

" Oh, Harry ! " sobbed the breathless girl.

“All right ; no harm done.”

He squeezed himself through first and his horse after him.

“Oh ! if you had been hurt !” Georgiana had got a cold fit. Her courage was going again.

“We’ve lost ground now. Never mind ; we must make it up.”

He leaped into his saddle, and on they went.

The wind bore the halloos of their pursuers after them ; but the church was in sight now, four miles off. They were in the valley ; the church was on a hill. There was that bright beacon of hope to steer to. So they went on at a racing pace, now gaining a little on their pursuers, now losing ground. Luckily the fences were not so stiff in this lower pasture land. Here they got along splendidly, and their pursuers were now out of sight, hidden by intervening hedgerows. This revived the lady’s courage. They galloped over a forty-acre meadow in high spirits.

"We are beating them," said the gentleman.

"We have beaten them," said the lady.

They sailed over a fence together ; a few yards off was a brook. They came to it. Georgiana's mare took it like a swallow.

Harry was left on the other side. His horse would not look at water.

"Now, I'm settled," he said.

"Oh, Harry ! rush him over it."

But he would not be rushed. She cleared it back again, and gave him a lead ; but he would not be led.

Wilton thrashed his horse, spurred him, coaxed him, and swore at him ; but on the bank he set his forelegs out like two pokers, and broke away bits of the turf, but nothing more.

"Oh, Harry ! what shall we do ? They will catch us. They must be in the next field by this time."

"Come and try to whip him over it ;" and

she did whip the horse's quarters with a will, but to no good purpose.

"Let us go some other way; we might come to a bridge. My father—my father's with them now, perhaps. That horse 'll never jump it, Harry."

"No, but I will ;" and throwing himself out of the saddle, he gave his horse a couple of stinging cuts on the shoulder and turned him loose. Then taking a run, Harry Wilton cleared the brook easily enough, and ran by Georgiana's side the rest of the way to the church.

"They've given us up," he said, as the pair mounted the hill.

"Thank Heaven for that."

In the churchyard was a little old stable, built for the parson to put his horse in. Here Georgiana's mare was tied to the rack. On the bridegroom's arm, panting, she entered the church ; but there was nobody there to receive her but the clerk.

“ Mr. Downes has not come yet.”

After a terrible ten minutes, hot and out of breath, he arrived.

“ Why did you not stop ? ” he asked.

“ Oh—h—h, we took you for your brother, my father’s Mr. Downes. Was not Mr. Elliot with you ? ”

“ I was,” said Elliot, who at this juncture, entered the vestry.

“ To what may we owe the honour of this visit ? ” asked Georgiana icily.

Now, young Elliot had come to do a very handsome thing.

“ I’ve come to give you away, instead of leaving it to the clerk to do—if you’ll let me.”

And when the parson, wearing a surplice over his boots and spurs, came to that part of the service which is thus set down :

“ ¶ *Then shall the Minister say,*

“ Who giveth this Woman to be married to this Man ? ”

Edward Elliot bravely answered, “ I do.”

So the elopement had proved a success. The rival suitors were sworn friends. Georgiana was supremely happy, and Harry was as proud as a peacock of his handsome bride.

But as they walked down the aisle, they heard the "dead halloo" almost in the church. The fox, after a brilliant run, had been killed in some straw in the stable in which Georgiana's horse stood, and now the Squire held her mare and his own horse at the gate of the churchyard.

The state of affairs needed no explanation. He took it in at one glance. His daughter trembled. She had never seen such a look on his face before. She advanced a step towards him.

"Never come near me again," was all he said, as he threw the reins of Georgiana's mare to his Whip, and called his hounds away to find another fox. But the field lingered to see the "happy pair"—the bride

in tears—depart ingloriously in a farmer's chaise.

Eighteen months passed. Mr. Haughmond was, in his opinion, the laughing-stock of the county. Women were vermin. He had publicly horsewhipped the reverend “skunk of a brother” who had presumed to marry his daughter in a church he had given him, horsewhipping a clergyman being not altogether a unique feat at the end of the eighteenth century. But Parson Downes and young Elliot let Georgiana know how things were going at Haughmond Hall. What they told her was this. First, the Squire left off cards ; then he talked of giving up the hounds to a younger man ; then his appetite began to fail him ; but last, and worst of all, he never got beyond his first bottle of port after dinner. These were good signs, Georgiana knew. But her father resolutely refused to see her, open her letters, or recognise her existence. She was dead to

him, he said, and he moped with his dogs all alone.

Mr^s. Wilton was a young lady of resource. She had devised the romantic elopement; now she hit upon another scheme.

She drove in a chaise thirteen miles on a hot July afternoon with her own old nurse and Master Gilbert Wilton behind her.

In the shrubbery the young gentleman, just six months old, was popped into a great wicker basket built on purpose. Nurse carried the basket to the butler. The butler carried it to the master of Haughmond Hall. Both were in the plot.

“Heaven help the man if he can find it in his heart to say owt but yea to such a beauty,” said the old woman who had nursed Georgiana, as she handed her treasure to her old fellow-servant.

Squire Haughmond woke from his nap.

A little cry made him aware of the visitor's presence.

He opened the hamper. There, on a great pillow, lay a lovely boy. On his little white frock was pinned a card with this upon it :

“ Grandfather, if you please, I’m come to see you.”

For the nurse and the mother there was an awful three minutes of suspense.

Then the Squire’s bell rang.

“ Bring my daughter here.”

Then to himself. “ The bitch ’ll not be far from the puppy.”

Inelegant, but not unkind. The Squire was a foxhunter and knew the habits of dogs and women.

“ God bless your dear heart, mistress,” cried the old nurse, breathless among the laurels where her mistress was in hiding, “ he’s got him on his knee.”

That afternoon Georgiana rode her own mare back to fetch her husband. They never left Haughmond Hall again, and a Wilton holds it now, as good a foxhunter as his great-grandfather was langsyne.

THE DEATH OF SAMUEL PICKWICK.

The following "*In memoriam*" notice should have appeared on the morning of May the 2nd, 1862, in one of the daily papers. It was, however, found impossible for the editor to insert it, in consequence of the pressure on his space caused by the opening of the Exhibition. In consequence of this accident the death of Mr. Pickwick was passed over with no notice from the press.

WE regret to announce the death, at an advanced age, of Mr. Samuel Pickwick, F.R.S., F.R.A.S., F.R.S.I., F.R.L.S., corresponding member of many foreign learned societies, formerly chairman of the Pickwick Club, which took place at his residence at Dulwich, on the night of April the 30th.

The deceased gentleman, as is well known, attracted considerable attention in the scientific world some thirty-five years ago by his discovery of an inscribed stone in a small Kentish village, now known as the "Kentish Stone" and deposited in the national collection. Some of our readers are old enough to remember the controversy which agitated the minds of savants for some months after that event. They will remember how it was finally concluded by Mr. Pickwick's masterpiece, the treatise in which he set the matter at rest, and triumphantly proved the antiquity of the monument and the importance of its inscription. One Blotton, otherwise unknown, was the chief assailant of this famous relic of former ages. Mr. Pickwick, after carefully collecting and collating all the various readings, gave his own, which, we believe, has never more been disputed.

The main features in this the more active portion of his life are already well known.

It will be interesting to record what has been ascertained of Mr. Pickwick's earlier life and his latest years.

Mr. Pickwick was born about the year 1778, in the heart of England's metropolis. Some of his German admirers, carried away, perhaps, by blind admiration, have suggested that to this circumstance may be attributed that expansive geniality, that kindly application of his profound knowledge of the human heart, which at all times characterized this great man. For, they argue, to be born and to be reared in the very centre and focus of England, and in the very *ὀμφάλος* of the British Dominion, is to gather to one's self, as it were to one point, all the converging lines of sympathy, brotherhood, charity, and patriotism. From the centre of England, they go on, rightly sprung the typical Englishman, regarded from a social point of view. Rightly, too, regarded from a scientific point of view. A great mathematician and geolo-

gist—a man of one pursuit—may well spring up elsewhere, but he whose knowledge was almost universal, whose insight into natural truths was almost intuition, whose breadth of view was unequalled—where else should he be born than in the very centre of London?

Mr. Pickwick was not of aristocratic descent. We nowhere find him boastful of his parentage. His father, we have reason to believe, was in business. That he was highly respected in his ward, we do not doubt; that he took a leading position among the citizens, we infer from the fact of his having been churchwarden for ten years in the parish of St. Cunegonda; that he was a man of liberal views, and of great natural piety, is certain from the life and opinions of his great son.

The place of the child Pickwick's education is, we are sorry to say, unknown to us. Our efforts to discover it have hitherto been unsuccessful. We have searched in the

records of St. Paul's School; in those of the Charter House; in those of Merchant Taylors': in vain. It is not a matter of great importance, and yet one would like to learn the name of the Gamaliel under whom he sat, and to pay a pilgrimage to the house where he first learnt the rudiments of the Latin tongue. Perhaps, in some forgotten nook, the bench on which he sat is still standing, now sat on by other boys; perhaps the beams of some old house could still show, traced with a boy's penknife, the initials S. P. But, most likely, all traces are destroyed of that obscure city school—all the benches broken up; all the beams pulled down; all the names planed out.

In early life Mr. Pickwick entered his father's counting-house. Like Defoe, like many great men, he spent his earlier days in unremitting toil. It is evident, however, that he threw into his daily business some portion of his gigantic intellect, for he was able to

retire comparatively early on a handsome independence; and, secondly, that his researches into science were carried on in the few leisure moments which his avocations permitted him; for during this period he produced those two startling pamphlets: the first on the Origin of the Hampstead Ponds, and the other on the Theory of Tittlebats. We have also the authority of an extract from the transactions of the club, dated May 12th, 1827, which proves that his scientific labours had been carried on also in the suburbs of Hornsey, Highgate, Brixton, and Camberwell. It was immediately after that date that he entered upon that long course of travel, which occupied him, including the three or four months spent in the Fleet Prison, more than three years. And it was during these three years that he began, carried on, and finally settled the Cobham Stone dispute. At the close of his travels, he purchased and furnished a small house

near Dulwich. In that delicious retreat, he spent the rest of his life, cheered by the love of his friends, the caresses of his godchildren, two or three of whom were always resident with him, and protected by the faithful Sam Weller, who, married to Mary, lived with him, and never quitted him till the day of his death. For a long time, too, the little cottage near the house was inhabited by Sam's father. But he died about twenty years since, partly of old age, and partly of disgust at the progress of railways. His last words, singularly fulfilled at this present day, were a prophecy that before long there would be no more stage coaches in England.

Mr. Pickwick's intellect remained clear to the last. One of the greatest trials that fell upon him was the death of his old friend Master Humphrey. He followed the good old man as the chief mourner, and wept over the grave of his most constant companion. The clock was left him by Master Hum-

phrey's will. Indeed, he had a singular collection of legacies. So many old friends, so many new friends—old in years—were his, and he lived to so great an age, that these mementoes of friendship had multiplied until they became a sort of small museum. For, there was good old Mr. Wardle's wassail bowl; there was a Saxon sword, bequeathed him by the clergyman of Dingley Dell; there was the chairman's hammer of the Pickwick Club; there were the sugar-tongs left him by Mr. Scrope, upon whom he had called for the Christmas charities; there were two walking-sticks of the Brothers Cheeryble; there was a mug left him by old Mr. Winkle; there was a portrait of Mr. Tupman, who died at Richmond, ten years before his revered chief. There, too, were humble memorials—the watch of Captain Cuttle; a wooden toy, cut by Newman Noggs; a walking-stick of ebony, inlaid with gold, sent from Hayti, by the prime minister, His

Excellency Alfred Jingle, Duke of Port Grave, together with the order of the Golden Sugar-cane, conferred on him by His Majesty the Emperor Soulouque, before that potentate's downfall. There was, then, also, a full-length portrait of Colonel Newcome, lately deceased; with him Mr. Pickwick was not personally acquainted, but having witnessed his conduct at the breaking of the Great Bank, conceived such a respect for his character, that he went and bought the portrait at the sale of the Colonel's effects. And, perhaps prized above all, there was the little sonnet which he could never look at without wiping his eyes. These curiosities were laid out with scrupulous care on a side table in his study. No one, except Sam Weller, was ever permitted to touch them; and on them he gazed night and morning, and thought of the many kind and honest hearts which he should never see again upon the earth. Every forenoon he walked in his garden, talked with

any of his godchildren who happened to be with him ; or with the little ones, the youngest of Sam's family, who played round his feet. He spent his evenings either in the company of those friends who visited him, for he never went out, or in that of Sam, who, when no one was present, took his place in the study, opposite to his master, brewed him a small glass of punch, smoked his pipe, and narrated old stories. And of these old stories, neither narrator nor listener ever tired. It was not that they were so good. Better stories have sprung up since ; but they were large-hearted and kindly, and they recalled old times and old scenes. It is now a few weeks since that Mr. Pickwick was sitting thus in his study with his old and faithful servant.

" Sam," he said, " young Mr. Winkle and his wife are coming here to-morrow."

" Baby comin', too ?"

" Baby, of course, comes too," said Mr. Pickwick.

“To-morrow’s your birthday, sir,” said Sam.

“My birthday! I am eighty-four, Sam, to-morrow. Eighty-four. It is a great age. I shall not see another birthday.”

“Nonsense, sir; you’re young yet—heart o’ five and twenty still—and I’m getting on for sixty. But, bless you, lots o’ people lives to a hundred, only the newspapers don’t find it out.”

“No, no, Sam; I shall not live to a hundred. I do not think I shall live many more months. I feel——”

“Don’t you talk like that, sir. We can’t afford to lose you yet. Dyin’, indeed? when I’m alive?”

“I am selfish, Sam. I ask not to live after all my old friends and companions. Let me go first.”

The old man looked into the fire, and a tear rolled down his face.

“Yes, all gone but you, and Winkle, and

Snodgrass. All gone : the old friends and the new. Even Perken is dead. Let me go first, Sam. Let me go first."

"Come, come ; we are both grey-headed. If you are eighty, I am sixty. Little difference between us. Poor Mary ! she's gone first of the three of us—poor girl !"

But Mr. Pickwick did not notice him. He was reading old faces in the coals.

"Your children will not be unprovided for, Sam," he said at length ; "but how could I reward you ?"

"Why—why—" said Sam, "up there I may be your servant for sure."

"Nay, nay ; there, at least, we are all equal in His eyes. But I hope, I think, we shall know all our friends up there. God has been very good to me during this life."

"Come, sir ; let me make your punch. Don't think about it. Lots of days for us both yet."

Mr. Pickwick took his punch, and drank it,

and went to bed. According to old custom, Sam tucked him in, put the night lamp safely on the mantelshelf, and the bell-pull within his reach, and was going away with a "Good-night, sir," when Mr. Pickwick called him back.

"Stay, Sam. Shake hands with me."

Sam took that poor old hand in his, and dropped a great tear on it.

"Life has been very sweet, friend Sam," said Mr. Pickwick; "but it will soon be over—soon be over. A better life awaits us, my friend; a better life."

Sam bent down, kissed his hand, and hurried out of the room. When he went downstairs, he found his daughter sitting up for him. His eyes were red and heavy.

"What is it, father? Is Mr. Pickwick ill?"

"I see it comin', my dear. I see it comin'. When it comes, send for the undertaker, and measure me too."

The next morning, when Sam took in his

master's cup of tea and hot water at eight o'clock, he found him sleeping on his side, so placidly, so peacefully, with such a sweet smile on his lips, that he did not like to wake him. He stood over the bed and looked at him. Suddenly, a trembling seized his limbs, he tottered to the table, placed on it the tea and the hot water, and reeled, rather than walked, back to the bed. He put his hand on Mr. Pickwick's forehead ; it was cold as ice ; on Mr. Pickwick's pulse, it was still ; he turned down the sheets, and put his hand on his heart, it was beating no more ; it too was cold, and stilled, and lifeless ; for Mr. Pickwick was dead.

Yes ; he had died silently, quietly, without, as it seemed, a single pang or a single struggle, in the dead of night.

Mr. Pickwick was dead, and the first news of the melancholy event was spread by Sam's daughter, who found her father at the bedside, pouring out his grief in passionate sobs.

She ran for the doctor ; but the doctor's aid was wanted only for the mourner.

It was on a clear, cold, moonlit night that Mr. Pickwick died—it was on a cloudy, dull, miserable morning when they buried him. All his living friends, all his godchildren, all the poor whom he had helped and cheered, followed his funeral. But the chief mourner was Sam Weller.

When Sam came home, he remarked that he didn't feel well. In the evening he was so much worse that his daughter sent for the doctor, and for her brother, who is a clerk in the Custom House ; a handsome lad, and clever—handsome, for he is like his mother ; clever, for he is like his father—and, like all the family, possessed of an unbounded love and admiration for his benefactor, Mr. Pickwick. The doctor recommended leeches and blisters, but Sam would have none of them.

“No,” he said ; “it's a comin'. I knew it was a comin'. I dreamed of Mary last night.

I dreamt that I see her a' sittin' on a cloud with Mr. Pickwick and the old 'un, and they beckoned me up. Samuel Pickwick Weller, my boy," said he, addressing his eldest son, "don't you never be ashamed of your father's bein' a servant: for he was the servant, you may tell 'em, of Mr. Pickwick; and your grandfather drove the Ipswich coach for fifteen years; and was respected off the coach and on. Mary, my gal, give me a glass of brandy and water, weak, my dear, and then Sammy 'll help me to bed."

They helped him to bed, and his head began to wander. He discoursed of Mr. Nupkins; of the red-nosed man; of kissing Mary behind the door; of folding mats; of Brick Lane; of Mr. John Smanker.

Next day he was worse, and delirious still. About four o'clock in the afternoon he sat up in bed. He appeared to know his children.

"My gal," said he, "be like your mother.

Her manner was affable and conformable. Your grandfather said so. My son, beware of widders. More widders is married than single women, your grandfather said so. Be honest, my children, and good ; be true and steady, and God bless you all." He looked up, with a last gaze of love, " I'm a-comin', Mary dear. I'm a-coming, sir. In one moment ;" and so fell back dead.

We record the death of this faithful and attached servant, because we think it is strikingly illustrative, not only of the sterling character of Sam, but of the sincere love which Mr. Pickwick inspired in all who lived with him. Sam was buried in the next grave to his master, seven days after he was put into the earth.

Mr. Pickwick's will, which was opened by his ward and distant cousin, Mr. Augustus Snodgrass, was found to contain an immense number of bequests. A handsome annuity of ten hundred pounds was left to poor Sam,

who, as we have seen, did not live to enjoy it; smaller annuities of fifty pounds to each of his children; and the rest to be divided equally among all his godsons. "I am a lonely man," he wrote; "I have no relations to quarrel over my money. I leave it to those whose love has brightened my latter days, my dear godchildren." The museum of mementoes was bequeathed to Mr. Snodgrass, to be passed on, at his death, to Mr. Winkle, should he survive him; at the death of the survivor, it was to go intact and entire to Mr. Winkle's eldest son. Mr. Nathaniel Samuel Pickwick Winkle; or should he, too, die, it was to go to Mr. Snodgrass's eldest son, Mr. Augustus Samuel Pickwick Snodgrass. A special token of affection, his own punch-bowl, was left to his friend and godson, Mr. John Samuel Pickwick Trundle, with his own recipe, the result of many years' careful investigation, of scientific principles, for the making and brewing of punch.

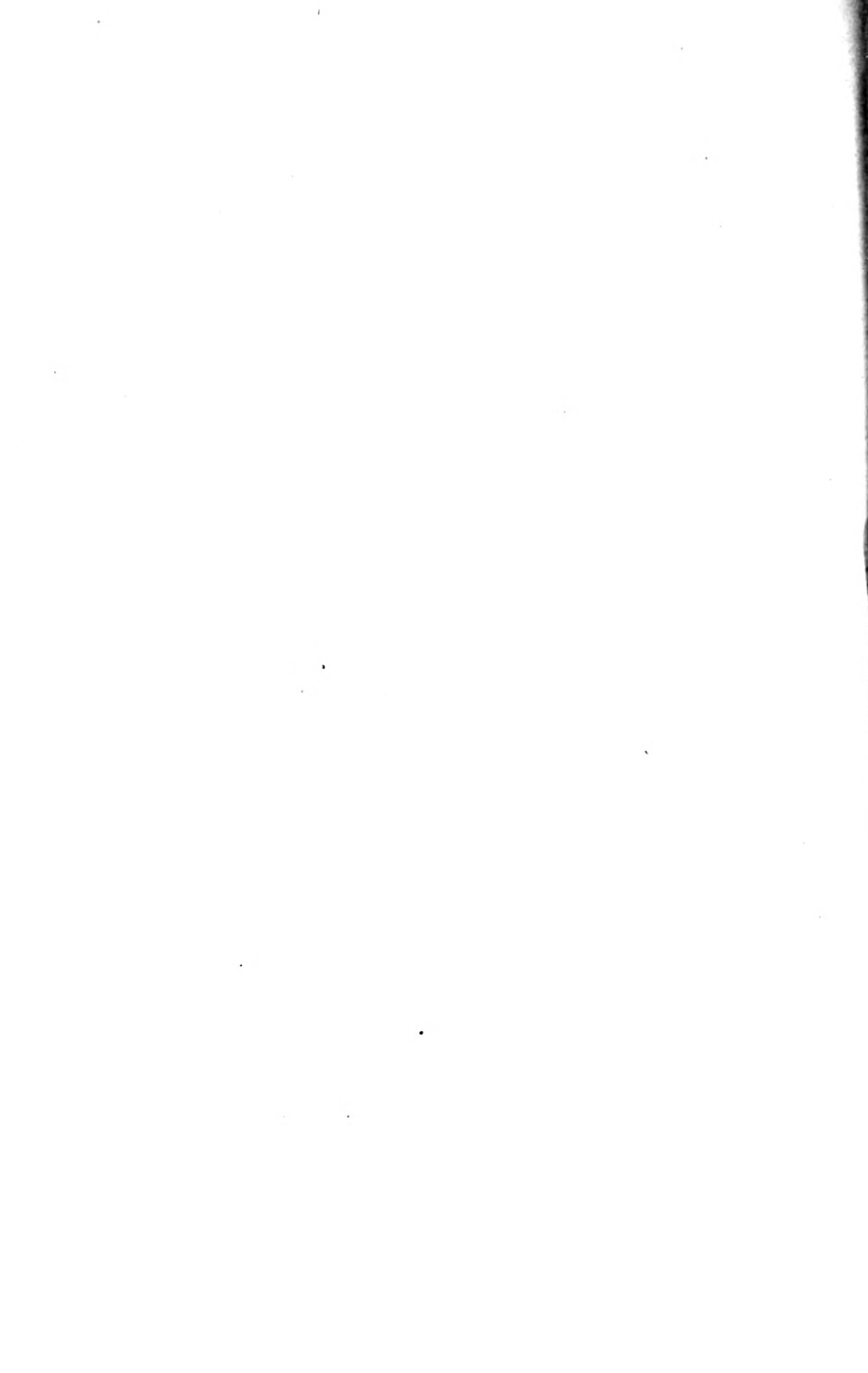
His house was to be inhabited by Sam Weller so long as he lived. At his death, the library and manuscripts were to go to the British Museum, and the furniture was then to be sold for the benefit of Sam's children. Each of his friends, however, was asked to choose a book from his shelves, and to illustrate it with a photograph of himself. There was still a row left of his pamphlet on the Cobham Stone controversy; and it is pleasing to be able to add that every one of his friends chose that work as the most fitting memorial of the departed.

We shall never again visit Dulwich without feeling that one great charm of the place was gone. Formerly, it was pleasing to think that in that village lived Mr. Pickwick; now we shall only sigh over the long life that has at last come to an end.

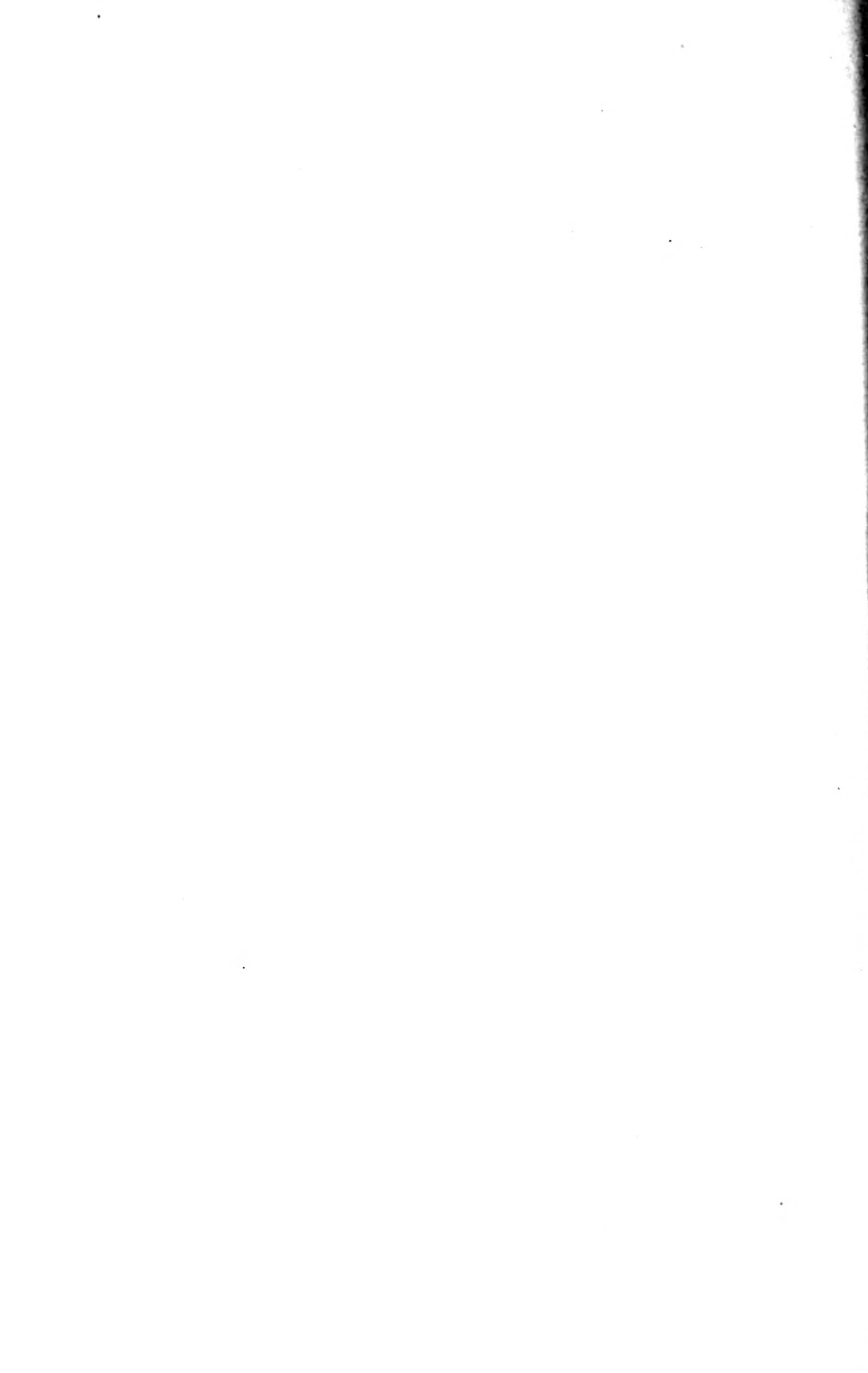
On his grave are engraved the words, "His works live after him." On Sam's grave, the words, "Faithful to the end."

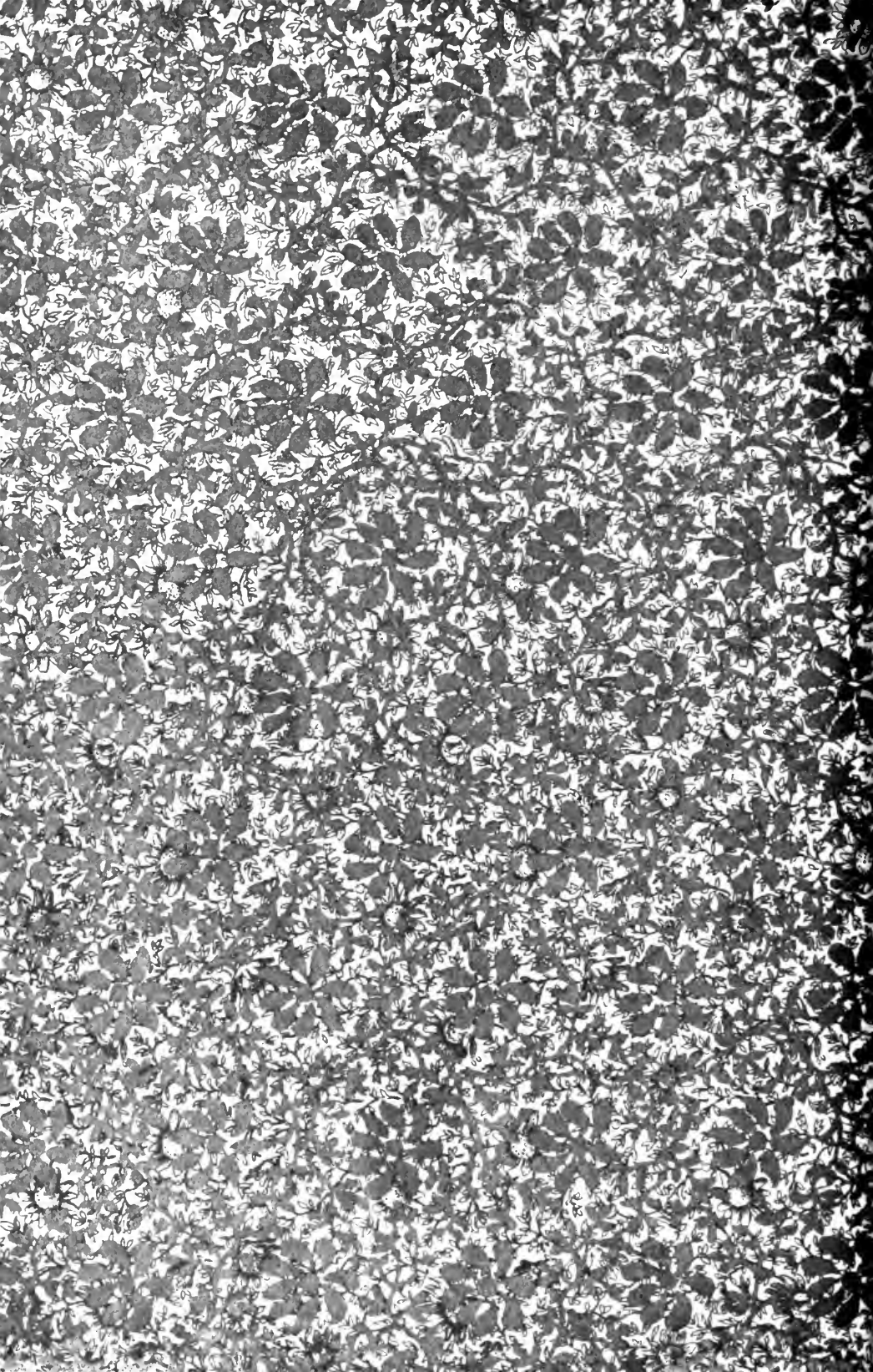
One word more. It is said that Mr. Snodgrass, whose poetic aspirations are so well known, intends, as soon as he has partially tranquillised his agitated spirits, to set about a poem on the Death of Mr. Pickwick.

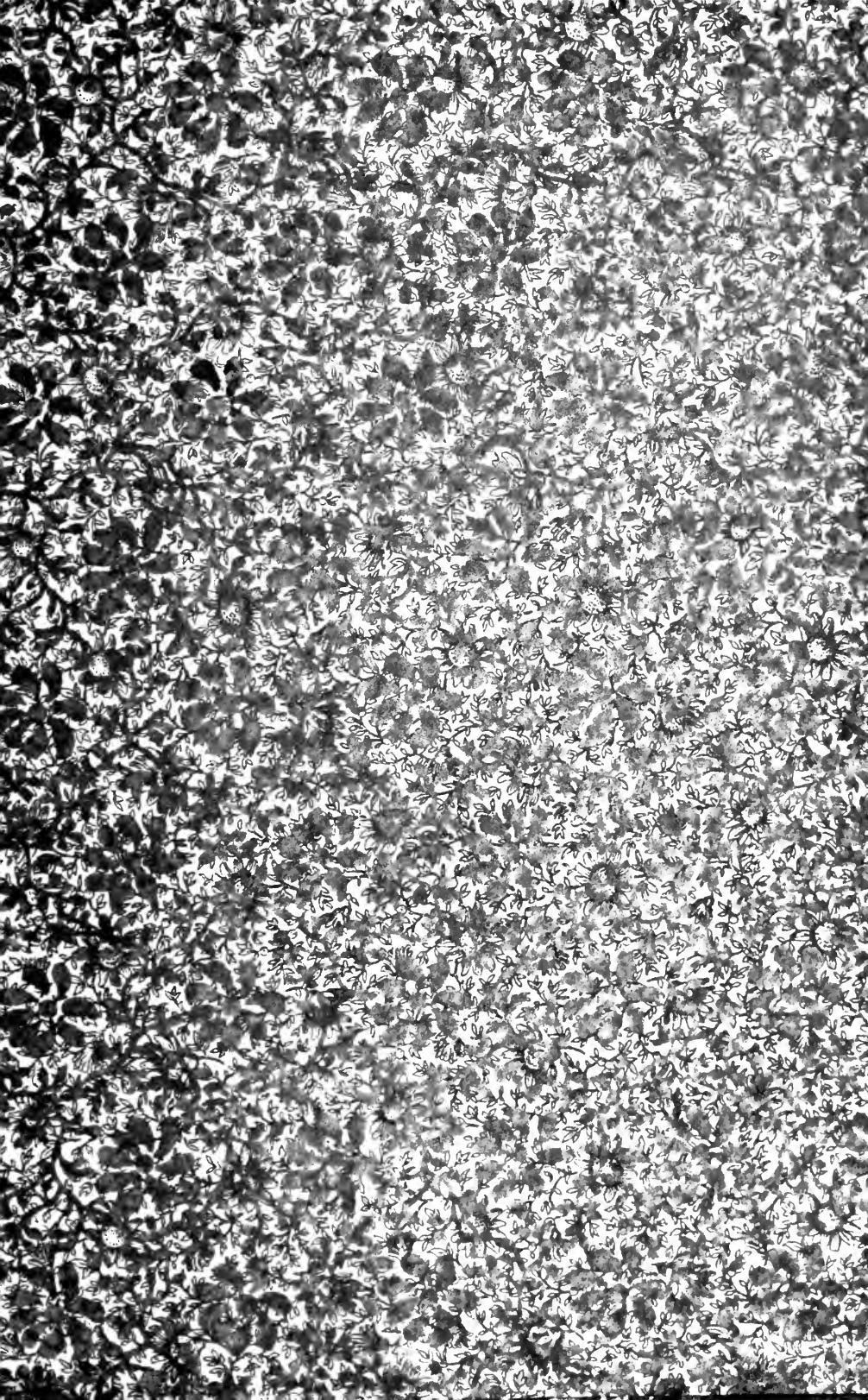
THE END.











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